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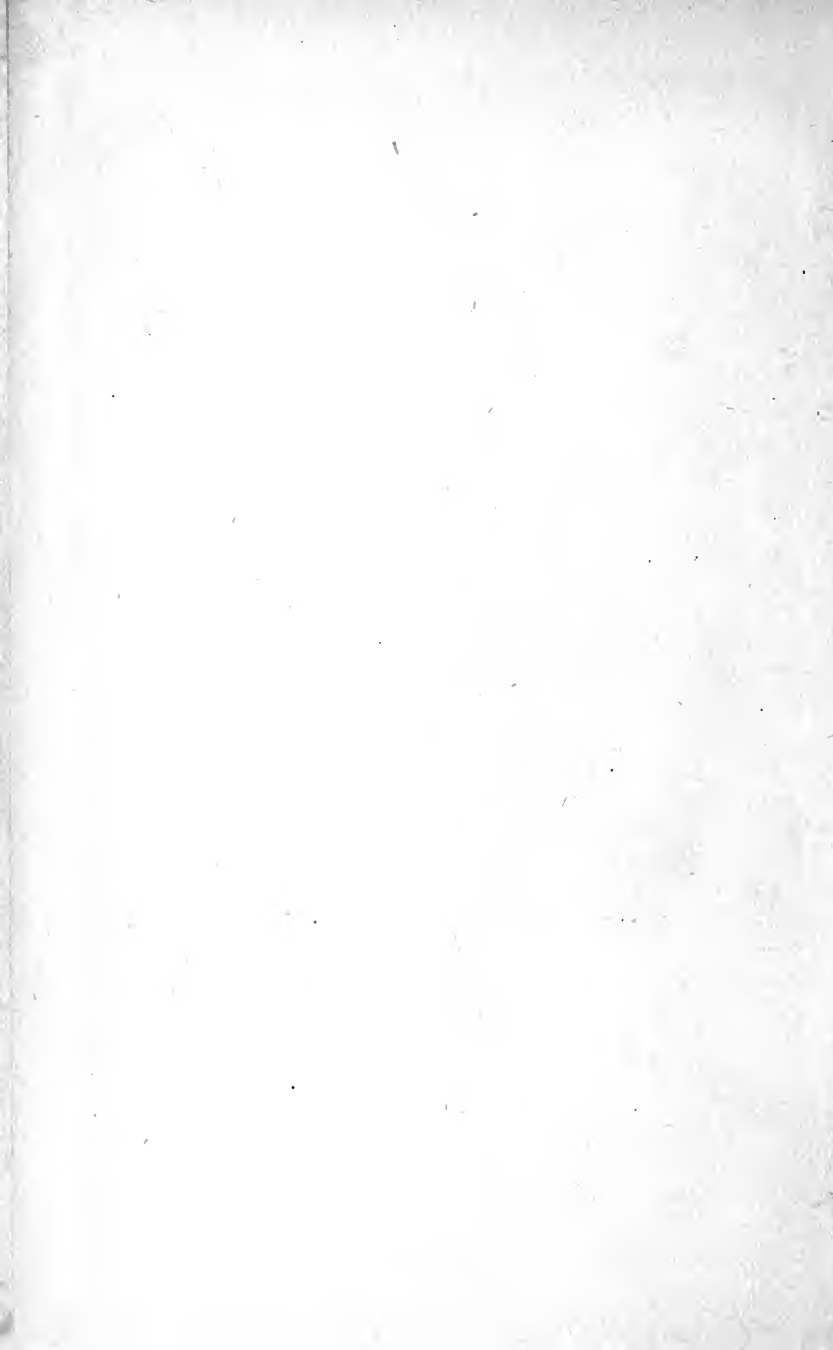


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Dec. 15 1884

187. Edm.



MARINO FALIERO

LONDON : PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
AND PARLIAMENT STREET

MARINO FALIERO

A TRAGEDY

BY

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

London

CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1885

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DEDICATION.

TO AURELIO SAFFI.

I.

YEAR after year has fallen on sleep, till change
Hath seen the fourth part of a century fade,
Since you, a guest to whom the vales were strange
Where Isis whispers to the murmuring shade
Above her face by winds and willows made,
And I, elate at heart with reverence, met.
Change must give place to death ere I forget
The pride that change of years has quenched not yet.

II.

Pride from profoundest humbleness of heart
Born, self-uplift at once and self-subdued,
Glowed, seeing his face whose hand had borne such part
In so sublime and strange vicissitude
As then filled all faint hearts with hope renewed
To think upon, and triumph ; though the time
Were dense and foul with darkness cast from crime
Across the heights that hope was fain to climb.

III.

Hope that had risen, a sun to match the sun
That fills and feeds all Italy with light,
Had set, and left the crowning work undone
That raised up Rome out of the shadow of night :
Yet so to have won the worst, to have fought the fight,
Seemed, as above the grave of hope cast down
Stood faith, and smiled against the whole world's frown,
A conquest lordlier than the conqueror's crown.

IV.

To have won the worst that chance could give, and worn
The wreath of adverse fortune as a sign
More bright than binds the brows of victory, borne
Higher than all trophies borne of tyrants shine—
What lordlier gift than this, what more divine,
Can earth or heaven make manifest, and bid
Men's hearts bow down and honour? Fate lies hid,
But not the work that true men dared and did.

V.

The years have given and taken away since then
More than was then foreseen of hope or fear.
Fallen are the towers of empire : all the men
Whose names made faint the heart of the earth to hear
Are broken as the trust they held so dear
Who put their trust in princes : and the sun
Sees Italy, as he in heaven is, one ;
But sees not him who spake, and this was done.

VI.

Not by the wise man's wit, the strong man's hand,
By swordsman's or by statesman's craft or might,
Sprang life again where life had left the land,
And light where hope nor memory now saw light :
Not first nor most by grace of these was night
Cast out, and darkness driven before the day
Far as a battle-broken host's array
Flies, and no force that fain would stay it can stay.

VII.

One spirit alone, one soul more strong than fate,
One heart whose heat was as the sundawn's fire,
Fed first with flame as heaven's immaculate
Faith, worn and wan and desperate of desire :
And men that felt that sacred breath suspire
Felt by mere speech and presence fugitive
The holy spirit of man made perfect give
Breath to the lips of death, that death might live.

VIII.

Not all as yet is yours, nor all is ours,
That shall, if righteousness and reason be,
Fulfil the trust of time with happier hours
And set their sons who fought for freedom free ;
Even theirs whose faith sees, as they may not see,
Your land and ours wax lovelier in the light
Republican, whereby the thrones most bright
Look hoar and wan as eve or black as night.

IX.

Our words and works, our thoughts and songs turn thither,
Toward one great end, as waves that press and roll.
Though waves be spent and ebb like hopes that wither,
These shall subside not ere they find the goal.

We know it, who yet with unforgetful soul
See shine and smile, where none may smite or strive,
Above us, higher than clouds and winds can drive,
The soul beloved beyond all souls alive.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MARINO FALIERO, *Doge of Venice.*

THE DUCHESS, *his wife.*

BERTUCCIO FALIERO, *nephew to the Doge.*

BENINTENDE, *Grand Chancellor.*

SER MICHELE STENO.

SER NICCOLÒ LIONI.

The Admiral of the Arsenal.

FILIPPO CALENDARO.

BERTUCCIO ISRAELLO.

BELTRAMO, *a follower of Lioni's.*

Lords, Ladies, Senators, Officers, Guards, and Attendants.

SCENE, VENICE.

Time, 1355.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The balcony of the ducal palace overlooking
the Piazza San Marco.*

MARINO FALIERO *and the DUCHESS, seated: Lords,
Ladies, and Attendants behind: among them* SER
MICHELE STENO *and* SER NICCOLÒ LIONI.

FALIERO.

The sun fights hard against us ere he die.
Canst thou see westward?

DUCHESS.

Not the huntsmen yet.

FALIERO.

Nay, nor the bull, belike: but ere they come
There should be stirring in the crowd far off:
Some wind should wake these waters, and some wave
Swell toward us from the sunset: but the square
Seems breathless as the very sea to left
That sleeps and thinks it summer. Thou shalt know
Full soon if love and liking toward mine own

Have made mine old eyes blind or wrecked the wits
That once were mine for judgment.

DUCHESS.

Nay, my lord,

I doubt not—nor did ever—

FALIERO.

Nay, my love,

But thou didst never trust : I say, my son,
My brother's born, made mine by verier love
Than every father bears his own, shall find
For manfulness and speed and noble skill
No master and no match of all his mates
In all the goodliest flower of lordliest youth
That lightens all this city. Dost thou think
The day's chase shall not leave him spirit and strength
To dance thy merriest maidens down to-night
Even till the first bell ring the banquet in ?
Nay, we shall find him as thy sire and I
Were fifty years or sixty since, when life
As glad and gallant spurred our light strong limbs
As quickens now these young men's toward the chase
That knits their thews for battle.

DUCHESS.

How the sun

Burns, now so near the mountains ! even at noon
It smote not sorer.

FALIERO.

Old men set not so.

A goodly grace it were to close up life
And seal the record fast of perfect days
If we might save one hour of strength and youth
To reap and be requickened ere we die
With royal repossession of the past
For sixty sovereign heartbeats pulsed of time,
And with one last full purple throb let life
Pass, and leave death's face glowing : yet perchance
It should but seem the harder so to die.
This is no festal fancy : but thy brow
Is graver than the time is. Art thou not
Weary ?

DUCHESS.

Not yet : nay, surely, no.

FALIERO.

Thy smile

Is brighter than thy voice.

DUCHESS.

My heart may be
More light than rings my tongue, since neither knows
A cause to teach it sadness.

STENO.

Did you mark

That ?

[*Aside to the lady next him.*]

LADY.

What ? no, nothing, I.

STENO.

She knows no cause :

What cause of sadness may so fair a face
Know, mated with so blithe a bridegroom's? Nay,
If fourscore years can pleasure not a wife,
There is no cheer nor comfort in white hairs,
No solace in man's dotage.

LADY.

Hush !

STENO.

And Fie !

Should not those words run still in couple? Ha !
The woman that cries Hush bids kiss : I learnt
So much of her that taught me kissing.

LADY.

Then

A foolish tutoress taught a graceless knave
Folly.

STENO.

That cries on vengeance : should my lip
Retaliate, would you cry not louder?

LADY.

Peace !

STENO.

What if I choose not peace but war?

LADY.

My lord,

You wrong this presence and yourself, and me
Most, and with least respect, of all.

STENO.

Respect !

Nay, I revere you more than mine own heart,
Which rests your servile chattel : for myself,
I know not aught worth reverence in me, save
Love,—love of one too sweet and hard, that wears
A flower in face, at heart a stone, and turns
My face to tears, my heart to fire, and laughs
As loud for scorn as men for mirth who look
To see the duke's brave nephew bring him back
For gift and trophied treasure of the chase
A broad bull's pair of—tributes.

LIONI.

Hark you, sir :

Speak lower : and speak not here at all.

STENO.

St. Mark !

Art thou my tutor?

LIONI.

Ay—to whip thee dumb,
Or strike thy folly dead at once. Be still,
For shame's sake—not for honour's would I bid
Thee.

STENO.

While this lady's eyes regard us, dumb
I will be : but hereafter—

LIONI.

Be but now
Silent: I bid thee now no more: but this
Thou shalt be.

STENO.

See now, sweet, what friends he hath,
Our good grey head of Venice! if one speak
At hunting-time of horns or tusks or spoil
That hot young hunters laugh at, straight they cry,
Peace, and respect, and spare our master. Christ!
What friends! were I fourscore, and thou—thyself,
Wouldst thou be half so good a friend of mine?
Ha? Nay, but answer—nay, thou shalt.

LADY.

I will
Once, and no more. Keep silence: and forget
If ever word of such a tongue as thine
Found audience of me.

STENO.

Am I then indeed
Fourscore, that I should not remember? Ha!
Nor woman am I, to forget—but some
Love dotards more than men.

LADY.

Who loves not men
May love such things as grovel of thy kind,
And deem such love not monstrous.

STENO.

Nay, but this
Asks answer of man's lips—not of his tongue—
Nay!

FALIERO.

Who is there that knows not where he is
And dreams the place a brothel? Gentlemen,
If here be any, need is none to bid
You spurn him out of sight.

LIONI.

Go ; if thou hast
Or shame or sense, abide not here till men
Hurl thee with fists and feet away.

STENO.

By God,
I will be—God forsake me else—revenged.
Sirs, lay not hand upon me. *[Exit.]*

FALIERO.

Dear my child,
Thine eyes are still set sunwards : hast thou heard
Nought of this brawl?

DUCHESS.

I would not.

FALIERO.

Thou dost well
God knows, no base or violent thing should come,

Had I God's power, in hearing or in sight
Of such as thou art.

DUCHESS.

Then were earth too soft
For souls to look on heaven ; but what I may
I would eschew of meaner knowledge.

FALIERO.

God

Guard thee from all unworthy thee, or fit
For earthlier sense than feeds thy spirit and keeps
Heaven still within thine eyeshot. Dost thou see
There, in that fiery field of heaven that fades
Beyond the extremest Euganean, aught
Worth quite the rapture of those eyes that yearn
Too high to look on Venice?

DUCHESS.

Sir, methought

We were not worthy—nor was ever man
Made in God's loftiest likeness—even to see
Such wonder and such glory live and die.

FALIERO.

And yet we live that look on it. This sight
Is verily other far than we beheld
When first October brought thy husband back
From Romeward, here to take on him the state
Wherein we now sit none the lower or less
For the ominous entrance to it. I never saw

A noon so like a nightfall : that we breathe
Unwithered yet of wicked signs, and see
The world still shine about us, might rebuke
All fearful faith in evil.

DUCHESS.

Yet was that
A woful welcome : all about the prow
Darkness, and all ahead and all astern
And all beside no sign but cloud adrift,
All blind as death and bitter : and at last—
I would not bring it on your memory back
Who fain would cast it out of mine.

FALIERO.

At last
To land between the columns where they die
Whom justice damns by judgment. Nay, are we
Traitors or thieves or manslayers, that the sign
Should make us wan with forethought? This foretold,
If aught foretell men aught, that he who came
Should bring men equal justice ; do them right,
Or die—as gladlier would I die than stand
In equal eyes of equitable men
A judge approved unrighteous. Be not thou
Moved, when the world is gracious and the sun
Speaks comfort, by remembrance of a sign
That lied, and was not presage. We came in
Darkling : and lo now if this earth and sea
Be not as heaven about us, and the time
Not more elate with fair festivity

Than should our hearts be—yea, though nought were
here

Save this bare beauty shown of wave and sky
To lift them up for love's sake. Has the world,
Think'st thou, so good a gift as this to give
Men's eyes that know not Venice?

DUCHESS.

Nay : but you,
Lord of two wives, love least the first espoused
Albeit the younger of them : more than me
You love that old hoar bride who caught your ring
Last autumn, and to-day laughs large and loud
On all that sail or swim : you dare not say
You have not loved her longest.

FALIERO.

But I dare
Swear, though no little thing this be to swear
For one whose heart and hand, whose praise and pride,
Were still mine old Adriatic's, mother and wife
And wellspring of mine honour, that I love
Not her nor heaven nor Venice more than thee
Whose laughter mocks us and whose lip maligns ;
Nay, not so much, thou knowest, were I not old
Or thou not young, I would not fear to say,
As now, lest youth reprove mine age of love
And shame chastise it for infirmity,
And thou—but in thine heart, I think, there lurks
No thought that should reprove it or chastise
With less than tender laughter ; though, being old,

The sea be meeter for my bride, and show
A wrinkled face with hoary fell that seems
More like mine own than thou canst show me.

DUCHESS.

How

Man's courtesy keeps time with falsehood, though
Truth ring rebuke unheeded ! Look, my lord,
How the sea bids the sun and us good night,
With what sweet sighs and laughter, light and wind
Contending as they kiss her, till the sigh
Laugh on her lip, and all her sunward smile
Subside in sighing to shoreward : will you say
God hath not given you there a goodlier bride
Than his who mates with woman ?

FALIERO.

She is fair—

Heaven, in our dreams of heaven, not fairer ; nay,
The heaven that lends her colour not so fair,
Being less in men's eyes living : but in thee,
Were even thy face no fairer found than hers,
There sleeps no chance of shipwreck. See, they come,
The hunters with their trophies, and in front,
If the sun play not with an old man's eyes,
My boy it is that leads them.

DUCHESS.

And unhurt.

[*Voices below* : Long live Faliero ! live Bertuccio long !

DUCHESS.

God and St. Mark be praised for all !

FALIERO.

Nay, child,

Wouldst thou make him a child or girl, to thank
God that he bears him like a man and takes
No hurt for lack of skill or manfulness
In young men's craft or pastime? Welcome, sirs ;
Well done, and welcome. Hither, son, to me.

Enter BERTUCCIO and Hunters.

Give this good lady thanks, who hath at heart
Such care of thee she might not choose but doubt
If manhood were enough in heart of thine
Or strength in hand for sportful service.

DUCHESS.

Nay ;

I said so never.

BERTUCCIO.

Sir, my thanks to both.

We have seen good sport ; but these my friends, who lay
The hunt's main honour on my single hand,
Malign themselves to praise me.

FALIERO.

Yet for that

Thy cheek need put not on the dye wherewith
The sunset's flag now hoisted strikes twice red
These westward palace-columns. Come : the dance

Will try thy mettle till the first bell sound
And bid the banquet in. A fairer night
Spring could not send us. Come beside me : so.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—*The Piazzetta.*

Enter STENO and LIONI.

STENO.

I will not and I shall not be revenged?
It cannot be? Thou sayest it?

LIONI.

This I say,
Thou shalt do well to get thee home and sleep.

STENO.

Sleep? and forgive? and pray, before I sleep,
God love and bless and comfort and sustain
With all the grace that consecrates old age
Faliero? Is my badge a hare—a dove—
A weasel—anything whose heart or gall
Is water, or is nothing? God shall first
Give up his place to Satan—heaven fall down
Below the lowest and loathliest gulf in hell—
Ere I take on me such dishonour.

LIONI.

Shame

Thou hast laid upon thyself already, nor
Canst hurl it off with howling : words can wash
No part of ignominy away that clings
As yet about thee : time and sufferance may,
And penitence, if manful. I would fain
Think thee, being noble, not ignoble ; as
Must all men think the man born prince or churl
Whom wrath or lust or rancorous self-regard
Drives past regard of honour.

STENO.

Look you, friend :
What, think you, shall these all men think, who read
Writ up to-morrow on the ducal seat,
The throne of office, this for epigraph—
'Marin Faliero of the fair-faced wife :
He keeps and others kiss her'—eh? or thus—
'Others enjoy her and he maintains her'—ha?

LIONI.

Thou art not such a hound at heart : thy tongue
Is viler than thy purpose.

STENO.

Wilt thou swear
This? Vile—why, vile were he that should endure
Insult ; not he that being offended dares
Take insolence by the beard—be it white or black—
And shake and spit upon it. Ay? by God!
Back turned and shoulder shrugged confute not me :

Abide awhile : be dawn my witness : wait,
And men shall find what heart is mine to strike,
What wit to wound mine enemy : meet me then,
And say which fool to-night spake wiselier here.

[Exeunt severally.]

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*An apartment in the ducal palace.*MARINO FALIERO *and the* DUCHESS.

FALIERO.

It does not please thee, then, if silence have
Speech, and if thine speak true, to hear me praise
Bertuccio? Has my boy deserved of thee
Ill? or what ails thee when I praise him?

DUCHESS.

Sir,

How should it hurt me that you praise—

FALIERO.

My son,

Mine, more than once my brother's : how, indeed?

DUCHESS.

Have I the keeping of your loves in charge
To unseal or seal their utterance up, my lord?

FALIERO.

Again, thy lord ! I am lord of all save thee.

DUCHESS.

You are sire of all this people.

FALIERO.

Nay, by Christ,

A bitter brood were mine then, and thyself
Mismated worse than April were with snow
Or January with harvest, being his bride
Who bore so dire a charge of fatherhood.
Thou, stepmother of Venice ? and this hand,
That could not curb nor guide against its will
A foot that fell but heavier than a dove's,
What power were in it to hold obedience fast,
Laid on the necks of lions ?

DUCHESS.

Why, men say

The lion will stoop not save to ladies' hands,
But such as mine may lead him.

FALIERO.

Thine ? I think

The very wolf would kiss and rend it not.

DUCHESS.

The very sea-wolf ?

FALIERO.

Verily, so meseems.

DUCHESS.

For so the strong sea-lion of Venice doth.

FALIERO.

This is a perilous beast whereof thou sayest
So sweet a thing so far from like to be—
A horrible and a fiend-faced shape, men call
The lion of the waters.

DUCHESS.

But St. Mark
Holds his in leash of love more fast, my lord,
Than ever violence may.

FALIERO.

By heaven and him,
Thy sweet wit's flight is even too fleet for me :
No marvel though thy gentle scorn smite sore
On weaker wits of younglings : yet I would,
Being more my child than even my wife to me,
Thine heart were more a sister's toward my son.

DUCHESS.

So is it indeed—and shall be so—and more,
The more we love our father and our lord,
Shall our two loves grow full, grow fire that springs
To Godward from the sacrifice it leaves
Consumed for man's burnt-offering.

FALIERO.

What ! thine eyes

Are very jewels of even such fire indeed.
I thought not so to kindle them : but yet
My heart grows great in gladness given of thine
Whose truth in such bright silence as is God's
Speaks love aloud and lies not.

DUCHESS.

No, my lord.

FALIERO.

It is not truth nor love then, sweet my child,
That lightens from thine eyeshot ?

DUCHESS.

Yea, my lord.

FALIERO.

I grow less fond than foolish, troubling thee,
Who yet am held or yet would hold myself
Not yet unmanned with dotage. Sooth is this,
I am lighter than my daily mood today
And heedless haply lest I wrong mine age
And weary thine with words unworthy thee
Or him that would be honoured of the world
Less than beloved—with love not all unmeet—
Of one or twain he loves as old men may.
Bertuccio loves me ; thou dost hate me not
That like a frost I touch thy flower, and breathe
As March breathes back the spirit of winter dead
On May that dwells where thou dost : but my son
Finds no more grace of thee to comfort him
Than April wins of the east wind. Wot thou well,

The long loose tongues of Tuscan wit would cast
Ill comment on this care of mine to bring
More close my wife's heart and my son's, being young,
And I a waif of winter, left astrand
Above the soft sea's tidemark whose warm lip
Is love's, that loves not age's : but I think
We are none of those whose folly, set in shame,
Makes mirth for John of Florence.

DUCHESS.

By God's grace,

No.

FALIERO.

And by grace of pure Venetian pride
And blood of blameless mothers. By St. Mark,
Shame, that stings sharpest of the worms in hell,
Seems, if those light-souled folks sing true, to them
No more a burning poison than the fly's
We brush from us, and know not : but for men
The eternal fire hath no such fang to smite
As this their jests make nought of. Life is brief—
Albeit thou knowest not, nor canst well believe,
But life is long and lovesome as thine age
In vision sees it, and in heart uplift
Plays prelude clear of presage—brief and void
Where laughing lusts fulfil its length of days
And nought save pleasure born seems worth desire ;
But long and full of fruit in all men's sight
Whereon the wild worm feeds not, nor the sun
Strikes, nor the wind makes war, nor frost lays hold,
Is the ageless life of honour, won and worn

With heart and hand most equal, and to time
Given as a pledge that something born of time
Is mightier found than death, and wears of right
God's name of everlasting.

DUCHESS.

Child I am,
Or child my lord will call me, yet himself
Knows this not better, holds no truer this truth,
Nor keeps more fast his faith in it than I.

FALIERO.

No need thy tongue should witness with thine eyes
How thine heart beats toward honour. Blind were he,
And mad with base brainsickness even to death,
Who seeing thee should not see it. Those Florentines
With names more gracious than their customs crown
Glad heads of graceless women ; jewelled names
That mock the bright stone's fire of constant heart,
Diamante, Gemma ; thine, were thine as these,
Might dare the vaunt unchallenged : such a name
Is in those eyes writ clear with fire more keen
Than ever shame bade shine or sin made burn
Where grace lay dead ere death. How now, my son?

Enter BERTUCCIO.

BERTUCCIO.

Most noble uncle—

FALIERO.

Nay, but art thou mazed?

No reverence toward our lady, nor a look
Save as of one distraught with fear, whose dreams
Are still as fire before his eyes by night
That leaves them dark by daytime? Yestereve,
Hadst thou so looked upon the bull, by Christ,
Thou hadst come not home his conqueror.

DUCHESS.

Sir, perchance
Your nephew with your grace would speak alone.

BERTUCCIO.

Ay, madam.

FALIERO.

Nay, sir. Why, what coil is this?
Thine eyes look scarce half drunken, but thy speech
Is thicker than with wine.

DUCHESS.

Good day, my lords.

FALIERO.

Pass out of earshot if thou list, but pass
—I pray thee, sweet!—no further.

[*Duchess withdraws.*

Now, my son,
If nought bemuse thy brain or bind thy tongue,
Speak.

BERTUCCIO.

Sire, I may not.

FALIERO.

God consume thee ! nay,
But bring thy wits back healed—what dost thou then
Here ?

BERTUCCIO.

What must needs, in my despite and thine,
Be done, and yet should be not. None but I
Dare tell my sire that Venice rings and roars
Aloud with monstrous mockery whence our name
Is rent as carrion by the vulturous beaks
That feed on fame and soil it. Sir, it were
A shame beyond all treason for my lips
To take this taint upon them : read, and see
What all have seen that in thine hall of state
Since dawn have entered, on thy sovereign seat
Nailed up in God's defiance and ours, a lie
That hell would hear not unrebuked, nor heaven
Endure and find no thunder.

[*Gives a paper to Faliero.*]

FALIERO.

God us aid !
Why, if the pageant match thy prologue, man,
The stage should shake to bear it.—Body of God !
What ?

DUCHESS.

Sir ! my lord !

BERTUCCIO.

Forbear him.

FALIERO.

Does the sun
Shine?—Did he smite me on the face?

DUCHESS.

Who?

FALIERO.

He.

[*Pointing to Bertuccio.*]

DUCHESS.

What have you given him?

BERTUCCIO.

Ask not.

FALIERO.

Let me think—
Art not thou too Faliero, and my son?

BERTUCCIO.

Ay.

FALIERO.

By the glory of God in heaven, I swear,
I think not as I thought it.

BERTUCCIO.

Then your thought
Errs, and the mind whose passion brings it forth
Strays far, and shakes toward ruin.

FALIERO.

It may be so,
Sir ; it may be so.

DUCHESS.

Heaven have pity on all !

FALIERO.

Madam, what man is this that speaks to me ?

DUCHESS.

My lord your nephew.

FALIERO.

Thine ? thy lord is this ?

Thy man ? thy master ?

BERTUCCIO.

Sir, bethink you—

FALIERO.

Ay—

I will bethink me surely. Fair my wife,
I pray you pardon mine unreverend age,
Shamed as it stands before you—spurned, and made
A thing for boys to spit at. In my sight,
I pray you, do not smile too broad at it.
White hairs, if he that bears them bear my place,
Are held, I know, unvenerable of all.
Fair sir, you are young, and men may honour you :
Tell me, whom am blind, how I should bear myself
In the eyes of men who see me that I see
Nothing.

DUCHESS.

O God, be pitiful !

BERTUCCIO.

My lord,
Refrain yourself ; you stagger toward the pit
Whose gulf is madness ; gather up your heart ;
Give not all rein to rage.

FALIERO.

I will not, sir.
There was a noise of hissing in mine ears ;
I could not hear you for it ; and in mine eyes
Blank night, and fire, and blindness. Now I see
The leprous beggar whom the town spits out
Hath more than I of honour. Many a year
I have dreamed of many a deed that brought not shame,
Not shame at all, but praise : these were not mine,
I know them now, they were not : mine have earned
For the utmost crown and close of all my life
Shame. I would know, were God not stricken dumb,
What deed I have done that this should fall on me.

BERTUCCIO.

My lord—

FALIERO.

Thy servant's servant, and a dog.
Yet art thou, too, vile ; nay, not vile as I,
But baser than a beaten bondman.

BERTUCCIO.

Sir,
If madness make you not a thrall indeed,

But reverence yet claim reverence, take some thought
Not for yourself, nor me.

FALIERO.

Dost thou desire
So much for her sake of me? Son of mine,
Look well upon thy father : let mine eyes
Take all the witness of the spirit in thine,
That I may know what heart thou hast indeed.
Bertuccio, if thine eyes lie, then is God
Dead, and the world hell's refuse.

BERTUCCIO.

Sire and lord,

If ever I have lied to you, I lie
Now.

FALIERO.

I believe thou liest not. Mark me, son,
This is no little trust I put in thee,
Believing yet, in face of this I read,
That man or God may lie not.

BERTUCCIO.

Speak to her.

FALIERO.

Take comfort, child : this world is foul, God wot,
That gives thee need of comfort.

DUCHESS.

I have none—

No need, I mean—if nought fare ill with you.

FALIERO.

Much, much there is fares ill with all men : yet,
With thee, if righteousness were loved in heaven,
Should nought at all fare ill for ever. Sweet,
As thou wouldst fain, if thou couldst ever sin,
Find for that sin forgiveness, pardon me.
I am great in years, and what I had borne in youth,
Not well perchance, yet better, now, being old,
I cannot bear, thou seest, at all. For this
Forgive me : not with will of mine it was
That thus I scared so sore thy harmless heart.
Speak to me not now : ere this hour be full,
It may be we may speak awhile again
Together : now must none abide with me. [*Exit.*

DUCHESS.

What have they said ?

BERTUCCIO.

Ask never that of man.

DUCHESS.

What have they said of me ?

BERTUCCIO.

I cannot say.

DUCHESS.

Thou wilt not—being mine enemy. Why, for shame
You should not, sir, keep silence.

BERTUCCIO.

Yet I will.

DUCHESS.

I never dreamt so dark a dream as this.

BERTUCCIO.

God send it no worse waking.

DUCHESS.

Now I know

You are even indeed her enemy, who believed
She had never so deserved of you. I have
No friend where friends I thought were mine, and find,
Where never I thought to find them, enemies. Whence
Have I deserved by chance of any man
That he should be mine enemy?

BERTUCCIO.

If I be,

I would not strike you shamefully at heart,
But rather bear a bitterer blame than this
Than right myself with doing you wrong. Would God
Your enemies and mine uncle's all were I !

DUCHESS.

Do you know them—these—what manner of men
they are ?

BERTUCCIO.

Save as I know that hell breeds worms and fire,
No.

DUCHESS.

Have I merited these? Have we that loved,
Have we that love, in God's clear sight or man's,
Sinned?

BERTUCCIO.

Nay, not thou, if heaven by love for earth
Sins not : if thou, then God in loving man
Sins.

DUCHESS.

Nay : for yet you never kissed my lips.
That day the truth sprang forth of thine, I swore
It should not bring my soul and thine to shame.
And thou too, didst not thou, for very love,
Swear it?

BERTUCCIO.

And stands mine oath not whole?

DUCHESS.

Give God

Honour, who hath kept in us our honour fast.
Whatever come between our death and this,
For that I thank him.

BERTUCCIO.

Ah, my love, my light,
Soul of my soul, and holier heart of mine,
Thee, thee I thank, that yet I live, and yet
Love, and yet stand not in all true men's eyes
Shamed. Am I pure as thou, that save through thee
I should be found no viler than I am?

Hadst thou been other, I perchance, God knows,
Had been a baser thing than galls us now.

DUCHESS.

Ay ! but I knew it or ever I wrung it forth—
Me then they smite at, and my lord in me,
Who have smitten him so sorely ?

BERTUCCIO.

Dear, how else ?

When seemed our sire a furious weakling, made
For any wind to work upon and wrest
Awry with passion that had struck no root
Deep even as love or honour ?

DUCHESS.

Woe is me !

Would God I were not !

Re-enter FALIERO.

FALIERO.

Pray thou no such prayer :

I heard that cry to Godward : call it back.
My faultless child, if prayer seem good to thee,
Pray : but for nought like death. And doubt thou
not

But yet thou hast given me daily more good things
Than God can give of evil ; nor may man,
Albeit his fang be deadlier than the snake's
And strike too deep for God or thee to heal,
Undo the good thou didst, or make a curse

Grow where thou sowedst a blessing. Go in peace ;
And take with thee love's full thanksgiving. Go.

DUCHESS.

My father, and my lord !

FALIERO.

My child and wife,
Go. *[Exit Duchess.]*

Now to thee, son. When thou gavest me this,
I do not ask thee if thou knewest the man.
It were impossible, out of reach of thought,
That mine own brother's and mine own heart's child
Should give it me, and say—I know the man ;
He lives : I did not take him by the throat
And make the lying soul leap through his lips
Before I told thee such a thing could live.

BERTUCCIO.

You do me right : I know not.

FALIERO.

This remains,
That we should know : being known, to thee nor me
Belongs the doomsman's labour of the lash
That is to scourge him out of life. My son,
I charge thee by thine honour and my love
Thou lay no hand upon him.

BERTUCCIO.

Nay, my lord,
Nay—

FALIERO.

Swear me this.

BERTUCCIO.

I will not.

FALIERO.

Swear, I say.

BERTUCCIO.

I cannot swear it, father.

FALIERO.

By Christ's blood,
But swear thou shalt, and keep it. Do not make
Thy sire indeed mad with more monstrous wrong
Than yet bows down his head dishonoured. Swear.

BERTUCCIO.

What?

FALIERO.

That albeit his life lay in thine hand
Thou wouldst not bruise it with a finger.

BERTUCCIO.

Sir,

How can I?

FALIERO.

Sir, by God, thou shalt not choose.
Art thou the hangman?

BERTUCCIO.

Be noble? If the knave perchance

FALIERO.

Dost thou mock thyself and me?
Noble?

BERTUCCIO.

My lord, I would not wrong the worst
Of all that wrong the names they wear : but yet
I cannot see in Venice one save one
Who might, being born base, and of no base name,
Conceive himself so far your enemy.

FALIERO.

Boy,
What knowest thou of their numbers that have cause,
Being vile, to hate me? Hath my rule not been
Righteous?

BERTUCCIO.

That stands not questionable of man.

FALIERO.

How then should more not hate than love me? Child,
Child !

BERTUCCIO.

But a man's wrath strikes more straight, my lord,
How vile soe'er, than toward a woman. This—
This is a dog's tooth that has poisoned you :
And yestereve a dog it was you bade
Spurn out of sight of honour.

FALIERO.

Steno?

BERTUCCIO.

He.

Else am not I Faliero.

FALIERO.

Then—I say,

Then,—be it so,—what wouldst thou do? Being my
son,

What wouldst thou dream or do, this being so?

BERTUCCIO.

Why,

With God's good will and yours, and good men's leave,
Hew out his heart for dogs to gnaw. Might this
Displease you?

FALIERO.

Why then yet is this to do?

BERTUCCIO.

Forgive me, father, and God forgive me : this
I am all on fire with shame to have spoken of
And think the man lives while I prate. But you
Know, and our Lord God knows, it is but now,
Now, even this instant breath of imminent time,
That I have guessed this.

FALIERO.

Ay; we know it well;

We, God and I.

BERTUCCIO.

And both of you give leave—
Or leave I crave of neither—pardon me,
But leave I crave not to set heel on him.

FALIERO.

God gives not leave ; and I forbid thee.

BERTUCCIO.

Then,
In God's teeth and in yours, I will, or God
Shall smite me helpless by your hand. My lord,
You do but justice on me, so to seem—
I would not say, to dwell in doubt of me.
I should have passed ere this out of your sight,
Silent.

FALIERO.

Thou shouldst not. Is this burden sore
That as thou sayest God lays on thee, or I,
To be as I am patient ?

BERTUCCIO.

Fain would I
Be, would God help me, even as you—were you
As I now stand, though shamefaced, in your sight.

FALIERO.

Ay—you are young and shamefaced—I am old,
And in my heart the shame is. But your face
Hath honour in it—and what have I to do,
What should I do with honour ? Thou dost make

Of mine more havoc and less count of me
Than yet mine enemies have, to take this charge
Upon the personal quarrel of thine hand,
Unchartered by commission.

BERTUCCIO.

And of me,
My lord, of me what make you? How shall men
Not spit when I pass by, at one that had
Nor heart nor hand, eye to behold nor ear
To hear the several scoffs, by glance or speech,
That base men cast on us? Nay, then what right
Had I to call any man base that lives
Or any worm that stings in secret? Sir,
Put not this shame upon me : when have I
Deserved it? Why, a beaten dog, a slave
Branded and whipped by justice, durst not bear
For very shame's sake, though he know not shame,
So great dishonour.

FALIERO.

Thou shalt bear it, son.

BERTUCCIO.

I will not.

FALIERO.

Son, what will is this of thine
To lift its head up when I bid it lie
And listen while mine own, thy father's will,
Speaks? How shalt thou that wilt not honour me
Take in thine hand mine honour? Mine, not thine,

Not yet, I tell thee, thine it is to say
Thou shalt or shalt not strike or spare the stroke
That is to make my fame, if hurt it be,
Whole. I, not thou, it is that heads the house
And bears the burden : I, not thou, meseems,
It was that fought at Zara. Nay, thine eyes
Answer, an old man then was young, and I
That now am young then was not : nor in sooth
Would I misdoubt or so misprize thee, boy,
As not to think thou hadst done as gladly well
As I that service, had it lain in thee,
Or any toward our country. But myself
Am not so bowed and bruised of ruinous time,
Not yet so beaten down of trampling years,
That I should make my staff or sword of thee,
And strike by delegation. On the state
Is laid the charge of right and might to deal
Justice for all men and myself and thee
By sovereignty of duty ; not on us
Lies of that load whereto the law puts hand
One feather's or one grain's weight. More : did we
Take so much on us of the general charge,
We were not loyal : and the dog we strike
Were yet, though viler than a leper's hound,
No viler then than we, who by God's gift
Being born of this the crown of commonweals,
Venetian, so should cast our crown away
That men born subject, unashamed to be
Called of their king subjects, might scoff at us
As children of no loftier state than theirs.

For where a man's will hangs above men's heads
Sheer as a sword or scourge might, and not one
Save by his grace hath grace to call himself
Man—there, if haply one be born a man,
Needs must he break the dogleash of the law
To do himself, being wronged, where no right is,
Right : but as base as he that should not break,
To show himself no dog, but man, their law,
Were he, that civic thief, the trustless knave
Who should not, being as we born masterless,
Put faith in freedom and the free man's law,
Justice, but like a king's man born, compelled
To cower with hounds or strike with rebels, rise
And right himself by wrong of all men else,
Shaming his country ; saying, ' I trust thee not ;
I dare not leave my cause upon thine hand,
Mine honour in thy keeping lies not sure ;
I must not set the chance of my good name
On such a dicer's cast as this, that thou
Wilt haply, should it like thee, do me right.'
No citizen were this man, nor unmeet
By right of birth and civic honour he
To call a man sovereign and lord : nor here
Lives one, I think, so vile a fool as this.
For me, my faith is in the state I serve
And those my fellow-servants, in whose hands
Rests now mine honour safe as theirs in mine.
Which trust should they redeem not, but give up
In mine their own fame forfeit, this were not
Venice.

BERTUCCIO.

But if perchance the thing fall out?
If some be peradventure less than thou
Venetian, equal-souled and just of eye,
Must our own hands not take our own right up?
If these abuse their honour, and forbear,
For love's or fear's sake, justice?

FALIERO.

If the sun
Leap out of heaven down on the Lido there
And quench him in Giudecca. [Rises.

BERTUCCIO.

Sir, but then —

FALIERO.

I charge thee, speak thereof to me no more. [Exeunt.

SCENE II. *The Piazzetta.*

Enter STENO, *meeting* LIONI and BELTRAMO.

STENO.

What says our Lioni now? hath he not heard
Nor seen if we lack heart or wit to strike?
Eh! what saith wisdom?

LIONI.

What indeed to thee

That art a knave and liar, a coward and fool?
Nothing.

STENO.

God's blood, sir !

LIONI.

For thy veins have none :
A beggar's trull breeds nobler brats than thee.
I bid thee, ser Michele, know me not.

STENO.

Well—but I bear such jests not every day ;
Thou knowest me that I do not.

LIONI.

Hound, be hence ;
And let a man draw breath unplagued of thine.

STENO.

Art thou my nobler ?

LIONI.

Fool, the beasts are that.
Wilt thou not leave this air taintless of thee ?
Wouldst thou be whipped—save of the hangman ?

STENO.

What !

LIONI.

Strike him, Beltramo.

BELTRAMO.

Sir, by Christ, not I :
I am not of that office.

STENO.

No, thou knave.
Thine hand against a noble !

BELTRAMO.

Not mine hand,
Surely ; but say my foot should strike a liar,
The blow should do his dogship honour : yea,
Were all high titles gilt about his head,
Scarce were he worthy to be spurned of me.

STENO.

Dost thou not hear then, Lioni, how thy knave
Dishonours thee, doing me dishonour ?

LIONI.

Man,
—All true men pardon one that calls thee so !—
Leave us, or I will do my face the shame
And thine the great and yet unmerited grace
To spit upon thee.

STENO.

Christ ! the men are mad.
Well, yet, God save and keep you !

LIONI.

Ay, from thee.
[Exit Steno.]

BELTRAMO.

I would the Doge bore such mind as yours.

LIONI.

Thou knowest he bears a nobler.

BELTRAMO.

This I know,

His blood is more intemperate than the sea
When red Libeccio takes it : half a sting
Will ravage all the channels of its course
With fever's furious poison : and this worm
Hath shot the sting into his heart.

LIONI.

Can I

Help him ? or thou, friend, heal it ?

BELTRAMO.

No, my lord.

Would God—

LIONI.

And what wouldst thou with God ?

BELTRAMO.

Alack,

What no man born, I doubt, may get of God
Whom he hath bidden in all this age of ours
Be born as I am.

LIONI.

And how wouldst thou be born ?

BELTRAMO.

Even thine and all men's equal.

LIONI.

Ay, good friend?

Why, now you thou me ; being a noble too,
What could my malcontent do more?

BELTRAMO.

My lord,

I trust and think, being noble as you, I were not
Less malcontent than now, being but by blood
Your footboy's fellow-citizen and yours.

LIONI.

Ay? Well, a brave man, were he seven times king,
Is but a brave man's peer : so be it : but God
Unmake me that I am and make me vile
If I conceive, were I and thou, man, mates,
What then should discontent thee.

BELTRAMO.

Why, to you

The slight thing then still fretting half my heart,
The secret small snake-headed thing, should seem
Nothing ; yet me not all alone it frets,
Galls no more mine than many a man's heart else,
That any man should bear of any man
Wrong, or that right should hold not equal rule
On one as on another.

LIONI.

Doth it not

Here?

BELTRAMO.

No, my lord : nor elsewhere on earth.

LIONI.

Why, then, God help thee, why should this forsooth
Vex thee, or them whose thought keeps tune with thine,
More than it preys on others?

BELTRAMO.

Ask of God

That ; some he bids not bear what others may—
Or haply may not all their patient lives
With pulseless hearts endure it.

LIONI.

God us aid !

Thy riddles ring no merrier, man, to me
Than that foul fool's uncleaner japes than thine.
What gadfly thought hath stung thee?

BELTRAMO.

Truth, my lord ;

Or call it pity—or call it love of right—
Malice, or covetousness, or envy—nay,
But I, howe'er men turn it, call my thought
Truth.

LIONI.

Be thou ne'er so strong to dive, thou shalt not
Pluck up from out the shadow where she sleeps
Truth : and for justice, if she keep not here

Her sovereign state and perfect kingdom, where
May man take thought and find her? Pity—nay,
But if our hearts should bleed but one thin tear
For each wrong known and each we know not of,
A day would drain them dry of blood. But what
Hath all our will and all our impotence,
Though this be strong as that is all too sure,
To do with him we spake of—be it for hurt
Or healing? Didst thou call on God to change
For him the face and fashion of the law
Whereby the world steers toward some end, and holds
Some heart up yet of comfort?

BELTRAMO.

Surely, no.

I did but think what good might come of ill
If this great wrong should smite a heart as great
With sense of other and older wrongs than this
Done toward no viler nor more abject hearts
Nor heaped on heads more worthy shame and scorn
Than age or place, fame of high deeds, desert,
Or pride, hath made Faliero's.

LIONI.

By this light,

I think the heat it sheds hath even as wine
Dazzled thy brain to darkness. How should this
Do thee or any man good, that thy lord,
My lord and thine, an old man full of days
And full of honours, being than all of these
Himself more honourable, should take by chance

A buffet from a fool's hand on his cheek,
Or spittle from a fool's mouth on his beard,
And hardly bear to bear it? Who shall reap
What harvest hence?

BELTRAMO.

Nor you, sir, know, nor I;
But haply—so priests lie not—God.

LIONI.

May he

Bind up thy brain with comfort ere it sweat
Forth of thy scalp with fever! Mark me, friend,
Thou dost thyself, being honest, no small wrong
To let such worms for sloth's sake feed on it.
I love thee, knowing thee valiant,—yea, by Christ,
I lie not, saying I love thee—and therein
If haply I deserve again of thee
Love, let me rather bid thee than beseech
Pluck all such thoughts up by the root, and take
Good counsel rather than intemperate care
Of what beseems not nor besteads thee. So
God give thee comfort and good day. Farewell.

[Exeunt severally.]

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*An apartment in the ducal palace.*

FALIERO and BERTUCCIO.

FALIERO.

Did not I charge thee think no more such thoughts
Or seal them up in silence? Wouldst thou make
Honour, that here hath station if on earth,
Dishonourable? for so to deem or doubt
Of men set highest in Venice or the world
Were no less insolent madness than to make
Thy mother's couch a harlot's. Hast thou seen
More days than I, that what I think to see
Thou, thou shouldst hold for questionable? I know
That God put nought of traitor nor of fool
In the essence of thy spirit : else—pardon me,
My brother ! I might hold this child of thine
Less than should be thy children.

BERTUCCIO.

That, my lord,

I would not be—God spare me that ; I think
That unrebuked your brother's son may say
Nor foe nor friend hath yet so found him.

FALIERO.

No ;

I have known thee honourable all thy brief life through
As they that founded us our house, and sure
As mine own sword here to my hand is : hence
It is that harshlier I rebuke thee not,
Misprizing thus thy lordliest elders. Well—
Meseems the message tarries that should bring
Their sovereign sentence to us : the cause, I thought
Should need nor bear a long debate : but just
It is that justice should not mix with rage
Her purity of patience : let them weigh
My worth against my wrong ere judgment speak,
And both against the wrongdoer : I were found
Even all too much a soldier, and my state
For me no fitter than for thee, should wrath
Distract my trust and reverence toward the law
And toward their hands that wield it : as indeed
It doth not—nay, it could not though I would
And though it could I would not give it leave

Enter an Officer.

OFFICER.

Health from the senate to the Doge I bring,
And this their sentence.

FALIERO.

Give me this in brief.

Ay—thou, Bertuccio.

BERTUCCIO.

Bid this man begone.

FALIERO.

Why? Hast thou read already?

BERTUCCIO.

Sir, by heaven

I pray you bid him go.

FALIERO.

Ay?—Leave us, friend.

[Exit Officer.]

Now; man, what is it?—I would not call thee boy,
Fluttering and faltering with so changed a cheek
Above thy task—but read.

BERTUCCIO.

I dare not.

FALIERO.

Ay?

BERTUCCIO.

I dare not, and I will not.

FALIERO.

Dost thou dare

Be called a coward?

BERTUCCIO.

Ay. No. I cannot tell.
Mine eyes were troubled, or my brain is touched.

FALIERO.

By Christ, I think so. Give it me.

BERTUCCIO.

I cannot. My lord,

FALIERO.

Cannot—will not—dare not? Hark,
Boy ; though thou find me patient, be not thou
Frontless, and light as riotous insolence.
Read.

BERTUCCIO.

Sir, you bade me give it in brief.

FALIERO.

By God,
I think the boy makes mirth of it. Read, or speak.

BERTUCCIO.

Michele Steno stands condemned—

FALIERO.

To death?
Exile? God smite thee !

BERTUCCIO.

Had he struck me dumb,

It scarce were harder for my tongue to say
No.

FALIERO.

Ah ! perpetual prison ?

BERTUCCIO.

 If two months,
With one year's after exile from the state,
Be held so much in Venice.

FALIERO.

 Or two days—
Why not two hours ? Thou liest ?

BERTUCCIO.

 I did not think
To hear that question ever, and reply,
Would God I did.

FALIERO.

 Thou didst not think ? Who heeds
What thoughts were thine ? I think this is not night
Wherein I walk through such a monstrous dream.

BERTUCCIO.

Day be it or night or twilight, sire of mine,
Two months it is that by these grave men's doom
On whose high-hearted honour hangs our own
The dog must lie in durance.

FALIERO.

Son, I think

Thou liest not, but for shame's most piteous sake
Wilt lay but half the truth upon thy tongue.
On : when the date is out, the man released
Shall take my seat, and I the foulest knave's
That bleeds and swelters in the galleys. Nay,
Spare me not this : read.

BERTUCCIO.

Father, not for heaven,

God knows, though heaven stood open, would I dare
Let one reproachful shadow of casual thought
Fall toward you—but would God you had given my
hand
Freedom, or I not asked it ! Mine, my fault
It is that shame besets us—cursed was I
To leave brute chance and men's malignities
Occasion so to smite our honour. Now
Two months must drain themselves away to death
Before the tongue be plucked out of his throat.

FALIERO.

Nor now nor then nor ever now need that
Be. My good son, I give thee kindly thanks
—And noble thankfulness thou art worthy of—
That thy forbearance more than my desert
Withholds thy tongue from revel in rebuke,
Thy lip from smiles, thine eye from triumph ; this

Would no man else, I doubt, forbear save thee,
Being wise and young, seeing one so grey in years
So witless and so vain of spirit and weak,
So confident and very a fool as now
The man men called Faliero. Thou alone,
Thou, only thou in Venice, wouldst, I think,
So spare and so forbear me. God requite
Thy reverence and thy gentleness of heart
Not as he now requites my pride and faith,
My faith and trust in others.

BERTUCCIO.

Father ! O,
Would God I had wronged them as they wrong thee
now
And stood before them shamed and abject !

FALIERO.

Peace.

Here is no matter more for words or tears
Bring me my wife—thy sister—hither.

[*Exit Bertuccio.*

Ay

Fourscore full years—and this the crown of them?
And this the seal set on mine honours? Why,
Had I deserved this,—were it possible
That man could ever have merited of the state
This, and that such a man, being born, could be
I,—this were yet unpardonable and vile
In them to deal such justice.

Re-enter BERTUCCIO with the DUCHESS.

Now, my child,

How fares it with thee ?

DUCHESS.

Peace be with my lord !

FALIERO.

Heaven be with hell, say : for so far apart
Peace and thy lord stand each from other. Thou—
With thee how fares it ?

DUCHESS.

Ill because of thee ;
Well for mine own part.

FALIERO.

Verily so I think ;
Ill fares it with thee for an old man's sake,
By the old man's fault, who by thyself shouldst fare
Well.

DUCHESS.

Sir, you know me, whether such a thought
Touched ever with unnatural thanklessness
And tainted so my spirit.

FALIERO.

Unnatural ? No :
For thanklessness was never unnatural yet.
But thou, what thanks, my daughter, owest thou me

Who have made thee not my daughter? Had I given
Thine hand for love's sake, ay, for love's, away,
Then thankless wouldst thou be to thank me not.
Now—

DUCHESS.

Dear and gracious ever have you been
Toward all found worthy grace and goodness : me
You have crowned and clothed with honour, being
your wife :
And toward your country—

FALIERO.

Good : forget not her.

DUCHESS.

Toward this most glorious country given of God
For man's elect, his chosen of men, to serve,
No son more glorious hath done service.

FALIERO.

—Found

More acceptable or worthier this reward.
Nay, stint not so thy speech : make on : thou sayest
None hath deserved—what guerdon?—more than I.

DUCHESS.

My lord, was this then wrought for recompense?
For guerdon is it we serve our country? This
Meseemed her highest reward of service done,
The grace to serve her.

FALIERO.

God's best grace and hers
For fourscore years I have held it : now I hold
A harlot's kiss, a hangman's wage, more high,
More precious gains and worthier good men's care,
Than grace to serve my country.

DUCHESS.

Dear my lord,
And wherefore ? not through wrath and hate of me,
Which might so much distemper and disease
The raging blood and brain of violent men
Fast bound with iron bands of honour and law
To women less than woman, that the world
Might seem to them for shame's sake blackness, day
Night, and faith dust, and love's face monstrous : yet
Should this not leave them dead in trust of heart
Toward motherhood and manhood, as are they
Whose hearts cast off their country : were I vile,
My shame could shame not Venice : but your heart,
Being clear of doubt as mine of shame, can hold
No thought more worthy than a poisonous dream
That so should feed its fever. If I be not
Vile, but in God's and man's eyes and in yours
Clean as my mother bare me clean of sin
Such as makes women shameful—then, though earth
Were full of tongues that cried on me, what hurt
Were this to you or God in heaven or me
If we no more than God permit the snake
To hurt the heel he hisses at, but shoots

No sting through flesh untainted? Were the world
Full of base eyes and tongues, ears quick to catch
Evil, and lips more swift to speed it, how
Should this make vile what were not? You it is,
My lord it is who wrongs me, to require
Revenge for that which if it need revenge
None ever can wash out: but if it need
None, being an emptier thing than air, the wrong
Were done of him that held it worth revenge.

FALIERO.

Thou art high of heart, my child—as children may
Be, and men may not.

DUCHESS.

Sir, but may not men
Learn if they list of children? Not of me
Would I desire you, but of Christ, to learn
Forbearance.

FALIERO.

Christ was no man's lord on earth,
No woman's husband.

DUCHESS.

God in flesh was he.

FALIERO.

Yea; and not I.

DUCHESS.

Nay, but his servant.

FALIERO.

Yea.

Venetian born, Christian baptized, and duke
Crowned : and a man grown grey in toil of arms ;
And profitable in service ; and a slave
Whom all he served may spit on. That were nought.
On thee for my sake may they.

DUCHESS.

No, my lord :

On some base thing they call me, which is not
I.

FALIERO.

Girl, who put so great a heart in thee ?

DUCHESS.

The man who hath shown me honour all my life.
Faliero.

FALIERO.

None of him shall learn it more.

DUCHESS.

Sir, all men shall that ever hear of him
So noble, and nobler therefore than were he
Who had held it needful on so vile a wrong
To set some seal of honour by revenge.

FALIERO.

Of me thou sayest not this. I am not the man.

DUCHESS.

If God give ear to prayer, thou shalt be.

FALIERO.

Ay—

If that which is not be, and that which is
Be not, I shall be : this I doubt not of.

DUCHESS.

My lord, am I then other, or yourself,
Because of tongues that if they smote a serf
Would seem not worth our heeding ?

FALIERO.

No, and ay.

The serf should heed not, nor for his sake we.
But—Child, it may be this has made me mad.
All day remembrance rides me, and by night
Bestrides and jades my brain, as though some bell
Rang right above my head violently struck
With pealing pulse of hammers : and in sleep
Some shame I know not seems to close me round
Cloudlike, and fasten on me like a fire,
And clothe me like a garment ; and it seems
Though God were good as thou, righteous and kind,
He could not help me, heal my hurt, undo
This evil men have done me, till myself
Know and take heart and kill it and be healed.
I am old, thou seest, I am old. God comfort thee

Who art not as I am, passionate and infirm :
Me shall he never.

DUCHESS.

Sir, not God nor man
But only passion bred and fed of pain
Turns your fair strength to faint infirmity
By night nor day, with dream nor reason. Is it
Less praise, less honour, less desirable,
To be reviled of hissing things whose souls
Are wingless worms and eyeless, than to have
Love, thanks, and reverence, of all souls alive
Worth reverence, thankfulness, or love ? Doth hell
Give God less praise than heaven, blaspheming him
With tongues whose praise would hail him fit for hell ?
Did vile men praise us, we might loathe ourselves
More than repentance yet bade ever man,
More than though good men blamed.

FALIERO.

Ay, like enough.

Thou hast a child's cheek and a wise man's tongue.
'Tis seventy years since I was called a child—
And wise man was I never. Hark thee, boy :
Thou art even as I was, loyal : now take note,
By me take note, and warning : turn thine heart,
Turn back thy face from honour ; change, and thrive :
Learn wisdom of a fool : be not abashed,
Forsaking all thy father taught or I,
All counsels and all creeds wherewith, being fools,

We filled thee full of folly : one that bears
Fourscore years' weight of veriest foolishness
So counsels and so charges thee. Bow down,
Down lower, if aught be lower, than lies the dust
That soils men's feet save when they tread on men
As these our masters now on thee and me
And on my brother dead, thy father. Take
All buffets of all heels thou dardest not bite
As one that thanks his chastener : let thy lip
Kiss every hand whence with some loathliest lie
Thy tongue may wrest forth wages : let thy name
For cowardice ring recorded more of men
Than ours for faith did ever : come there war,
Peril, or chance of evil against the state,
Make thyself wings, take to thee gold, begone,
Fly : strike no stroke, nor seem but fain to strike ;
Haste, let the foe not find thee tarrying, run,
Cover thine head and hide thee : so shalt thou
Deserve, if man of Venice may deserve,
Honour.

BERTUCCIO.

My lord and sire !

FALIERO.

Forget those names.

There lives no title or note of fatherhood
More venerable than sound the shivering bells
That fringe a jester's cap ; no lordship now
That shines too sure and high for shame to soil
On heads less base than Steno's.

BERTUCCIO.

Hear me, sir.

FALIERO.

Who art thou that I should hear thee? Do men hear
Me? But whate'er thou be thou art more than I;
Men call not thee the vilest name they can,
Doge.

BERTUCCIO.

The noblest yet of earth's it were,
Would he that bears it but be strong in scorn
Of things less worth his rage than once the foes
Who found him strong in action.

FALIERO.

Had I wist,
Who am now not strong, thou seest, save only in
speech,
And even in speech time-stricken—had I wist,
When for this Venice I smote Hungary down
And of her fourscore thousand gave a tithe
For crows to rend at Zara—when meseemed
I fought for men that made our commonweal
A light in God's eye brighter than the sun,
That then I fought for Steno—Speak not thou;
I know thee, what thou wouldst, with leave, forsooth,
Say: but for these that fence him round I fought;
For these that brand me shameful for his sake,
For these that set their seal upon his words,
For these that find them worth so soft rebuke

As might a sire lay on his long-tongued child
Who prattles truth untimely—boy, for these
I fought, and fought for Steno.

Enter an Attendant.

ATTENDANT.

Noble sir,
The admiral of the arsenal desires
Audience.

FALIERO.

A man requires, thou sayest, of me
Audience? The world breeds yet, come rain or sun,
Fools—how should liars and knaves else live, or God
Be served and worshipped of the world? My lord,
Admit him.

ATTENDANT.

Sir !

FALIERO.

Thou art not Venetian ?

ATTENDANT.

As sure as you chief prince in Venice.

Yea—

FALIERO.

Then,
Wert thou the lowest that welters out of life
Down in the Wells till death remember him,
Thou art master and lord and sovereign over me.

If I may pray thee do me so much grace
As not to smite me therefore on the cheek,
I would desire thee give thy fellow lord
Admittance to your servant. [*Exit Attendant.*

Thou, my boy,

Go. Whatsoë'er from Venice come to me,
From Venice, earth, or heaven, can be but now
Insult ; and thou, being loyal, and a fool—
Kind, and my brother's issue—fain would I,
Being foolish too, and kindly, fain I would
Thou didst not see it. Go thou, my love, with him.
Peace be with both. [*Exeunt Duchess and Bertuccio.*

Enter the Admiral of the Arsenal.

ADMIRAL.

Health to the Doge ! Sir,
I pray you look but on my face.

FALIERO.

It bleeds.

Thy brows are sorely bruised. Art thou come here
For surgery ?

ADMIRAL.

Yea, by furtherance of your grace
To find my fame a surgeon.

FALIERO.

Fame? what is it?

The word is not Venetian, sir ; it means Honour.

ADMIRAL.

Toward whom then should I turn in trust
Save toward our highest in honour ?

FALIERO.

Be it enough
Thou art found a brawler : being a soldier, man,
Be not a jester too.

ADMIRAL.

By neither name,
Sir, am I known in Venice. As yourself
Are honourable and a righteous man in rule,
I pray you not but charge you do me right.

FALIERO.

Or wilt thou have me pluck the sun from heaven
And put it in thine hand ? Nay, that were nought ;
The sun, though save by sight we touch it not
Nor save in thought come near it, yet in heaven
By sight and thought we reach and find it there,
And here by good works done on earth ; but where,
And by what sign, in Venice or on earth,
Honour ?

ADMIRAL.

I crave no more than right.

FALIERO.

No more ?

Strange temperance and strange modesty in man
To crave no more than what, for all we see,
Not God's almightiness hath power to give—
Or else our less than righteous God lacks grace,
And hath not heart to do it. What wrongs are thine?
At least I have thus much more of grace than God,
That I will hearken if not help thee.

ADMIRAL.

Sir,

There came but now to the arsenal a man— [*Pauses.*

FALIERO.

And smote another on the face—is this
Thy wrong? Thou canst not see the shame on mine
That thou shouldst make thy plaint of this. Look
here—

Seest thou no sign in flesh and blood that saith
What hands have buffeted me?

ADMIRAL.

My lord, my lord,

It is not I who am wronged of these your jests,
But you much more in honour.

FALIERO.

That being nought,

Dead, rotten, if the thing had ever life,
I am nowise touched at all. But heed not me :
I had no mind to wrong thee. On.

ADMIRAL.

This man,

Being noble, of the seed of Barbaro,
Required of service to be done for him
The masters of the galleys ; I being by
Made answer for mine officers and thine,
This could not be : whereon we fell to words ;
He chid my duteousness in office there
As toward his place undutiful, and I
Rebuked his rank for insolence : he thereat
Spake not again, but smote me with his hand
Clenched, and the jewel thereon that loaded it
Hath writ his wrath where each man's eye may read
That sees mine own yet blind with blood.

FALIERO.

What then ?

ADMIRAL.

Why, this then, if your grace love righteousness
More than reproach of men for mad misrule—
Justice.

FALIERO.

Come hither—here, beside me. Look
Northwestward, by St. Mark's, athwart the light.
Seest thou that beggar there asprawl and stark
Who seems to soil the sunshine where he lies ?

ADMIRAL.

Ay, my lord.

FALIERO.

Ask of him to help us both.

ADMIRAL.

My lord, the temper of your angry wit
Seems wild and harsh to mine.

FALIERO.

Seem all things not
To wise men wild as madness, harsh as hell
To men that ever think on heaven? Thou knowest—
Nay, then, thou knowest not how they deal with me
Who are lords of ours, who hold us in their hands,
Who bid us be and be not. This at least
Thou hast heard—no gondolier but sings it, none
But laughs at large who listens—this ye know,
What manner of wrong was done me late, of whom,
And toward what judgment answerable he stands
Who doth me, being too weak to right myself,
Wrong. Answer not: I did not bid thee say
Thou knowest, for mine own shame's sake, and for
thine

I would not hear thee swear thou knowest it not.
Now, even this hour, the sentence comes to me
Given on my wrongdoer by our lords of law
Whose number makes up half my fourscore years.
Man, what had thine been?

ADMIRAL.

What but death?

FALIERO.

Indeed?

Death? Is it possible or believable
There lives a man that is no kin to me
Who holds mine honour worth the washing? Friend,
These men, born high, have doomed this high-born
man
To lie secluded two close months in ward
And walk again forth freely.

ADMIRAL.

Will your grace

Endure it?

FALIERO.

Seest thou not how patiently?
Have all their forty buffets on this face
Raised blood enough to blush with?

ADMIRAL.

Good sir duke,

If you be minded verily for revenge,
These husbands and these sons of harlots, called
Nobles—these lineal liars whose tongues thrust out
Lap blood, lick dust, or lisp for lewdness—these
Whose mirth, whose life, whose honour hath for root
Adultery—these that laugh not save at shame,
But turn all shame to laughter—these our lords
May find a lord who need but lack the will
To hew them all in pieces.

FALIERO.

Ay, my friend?

ADMIRAL.

Sir, were you mine and theirs who are friends indeed
With all that groan and yearn, despair for shame,
Wax mad in hope—with all whose bloody sweat
Anoints and sleeks and supples and makes fat
Our lusty lords in Venice—this might be
Surely.

FALIERO.

But now didst thou rebuke me—yea,
For mockery chidd'st thou me : what words for this
Shall I find fit to chide thee?

ADMIRAL.

Nay, my duke,
What words or stripes may please you : shame on me
Can work no further now nor heavier wrong :
But, holding me herein a liar or mad,
You give truth's self and your own soul the lie
If hope or faith or yearning or desire
Be verily in your soul toward vengeance.

FALIERO.

If

God's will be strong, man's will be weak, and good
Be not more vile than evil—if hate or love,
Wrath, shame, or righteousness, be anything,
Or aught at all be more than nothing, then
Much more than vengeance I require ; and yet
Desire beyond all else desirable

Vengeance. If these who have wronged me, being
wiped out,
May leave this Venice with their blood washed white,
Clean, splendid, sweet for sea and sun to kiss
Till earth adore and heaven applaud her—then
Shall my desire, till then insatiable,
Feed full, and sleep for ever.

ADMIRAL.

Sir, do you
Set but your hand with ours to it, and the work
Is even half wrought already.

FALIERO.

What are they
Who have in hand so high a work, and bid
Mine own take part and lot with theirs therein?

ADMIRAL.

My faith in yours needs not assurance ; yet
Must none unpledged have knowledge of it, or take
Our lives in keeping : therefore, ere I speak,
Swear.

FALIERO.

Wiser men should bear thy charge than thou :
Swear ? If thou lack assurance of me, friend,
What oath of force may give it thee ? If by God
I swear, being one that might, unsworn to God,
Betray thee, will my treasonous tongue be tied,
Think'st thou, by fear of God, not fearing shame ?

Were oath or word worth half a grain of dust
If, save for fear of hell and God, I durst,
Or would, albeit God's tongue should bid me, lie?
Or if by Venice, shall my faith to her
Not bind me, being unsworn, to faith with you
If well ye will toward Venice—and if ill,
What oath could pledge me to this breach of oath,
The mere misprision of your treason—me,
Who stand for Venice here, in all time's sight,
To Godward and to manward answerable?
Or by mine honour would you bind me fast
To abstain from that which could I dream to do
My soul were with Iscariot's fast in hell
Now while my body yet should walk the world
And make the sun ashamed to cast on earth
The shameful shadow of such a soulless thing
Spared by sheer scorn of Satan's and of God's,
Rejected of damnation? He that swears
Faith toward his fellow bids him note and heed
That faith is none within him, seeing his word
Wants worth and weight which if it want indeed
No heavier oath than ever shook the soul
With thunder and with terror and with air
Can add or cast upon it.

ADMIRAL.

On your soul

Then be it, sir.

FALIERO.

Yea, friend: be it on mine and thine.

And now, as I and thou are faithful men,
Speak.

ADMIRAL.

Sir, albeit as yet conspiracy
Be shapeless as a shadow, this dark air
Breeds not beneath our iron heaven of rule
Clouds charged with less than lightning ; men there
are
Whose hate and love toward freedom and toward shame
Are full as even your own great heart of fire.
With such if you would commune on this cause,
Two might I now bid hither ; a seaman tried,
Filippo Calendaro, swift of hand
And stout of heart as is his comrade wise
And keen of spirit and craft in wiles of war,
Bertuccio Israello : these, by secret word
Being called to counsel, shall not fail at need
To give us note whom else to take in trust
As in this cause auxiliaries.

FALIERO.

Therein

Lord nor lieutenant nor subordinate
Should any be, but equal all in heart
And all in station as in action all
Equal : for if in heart we be not one
How shall not each loose limb of our design
Rot, and relax in sunder ? Not allies,
Auxiliaries nor seconds we require,
But single-souled sons of one mother born

And brothers one in spirit ; born as Christ
Of this pure virgin's womb, the commonweal's,
Whom fools and slaves would fain make false and foul,
Being bastard-hearted, though true-born : but she
Knows shame no more than them she knows, whose
souls

Were shapen as for service of a king,
Not citizen, but subject. Bid our friends
Hither : but ere you go, I pray you call
My nephew to me.

ADMIRAL.

Sir, God give you grace
To take this cause upon you ; if he give,
No name that ever grew a star shall burn
Too high for yours to shine by.

FALIERO.

This perchance
May and perchance may be not : God's own hand
Holds fast all issues of our deeds : with him
The end of all our ends is, but with us
Our ends are, just or unjust : though our works
Find righteous or unrighteous judgment, this
At least is ours, to make them righteous. Go.

[*Exit Admiral.*]

What sentence shall be given on mine ? Of man,
As ill or well God means me, well or ill
Shall judgment pass upon me : but of God,
If God himself be righteous or be God,
Who being unrighteous were but god of hell,

The sentence given shall judge me just : for these
Who are part and parcel of my shame and theirs
Defile not nor disgrace me, whom they spurn
And smile and spit on, but their country : nay,
Nor only this, but freedom, duty, right,
Honour, and all things whence the unlikeness lives
Of commonwealths and kingdoms ; all whence grows
The difference found of man whose brow fronts heaven
And beast whose eye seeks earthward—citizen
Whose hand implores a grace from no man's hand,
And thrall whose lip craves pardon if it smile.

Re-enter BERTUCCIO.

How farest thou now, boy ? When I bade thee hence,
It was to spare thee sight and share of shame
I thought should fall upon me : but I knew
Thou wouldst have borne therein thy loyal part,
And eased, if pain of thine or love might ease,
My sufferance of mine own. Behold me now :
What seest thou ? rage, or shame, or pride, or fear,
Or what vile passion else ?

BERTUCCIO.

Dear father, none,
As never yet man saw nor man shall see
A sign on that the noblest face alive
Dishonourable.

FALIERO.

Nor aught untimely ? nought

Strange? For the world is other with me, boy,
Than when we parted.

BERTUCCIO.

Sir, I dare not say,
Not though the word seem written on your brow,
Triumph—nor, though this lighten from your eye,
Joy.

FALIERO.

Yet, by Christ's own cross, my brother's child,
Thou shouldst not lie to say so.

BERTUCCIO.

What good hap
Hath brought them back whence late by men's default
Such looks, long natural there, were banished?

FALIERO.

Son,

A poor man's wrong and mine and all the world's,
Diverse and individual, many and one,
Insufferable of long-suffering less than God's,
Of all endurance unendurable else,
Being come to flood and fullness now, the tide
Is risen in mine as in the sea's own heart
To tempest and to triumph. Not for nought
Am I that wild wife's bridegroom—old and hoar,
Not sapless yet nor soulless. Well she knows,
And well the wind our brother, whence our sails
Went swollen and strong toward Istria, that her head
Might bow down bruised with battle, and yield up

Its crested crown to Venice—well the world
Knows if this grey-grown head and lank right hand
Were once unserviceable : and she, my wife,
The sea it is that sends me comfort, son,
Strength, and assurance of her sons and mine,
Thy brethren, here to stablish right for wrong,
For treason truth, for thraldom like as ours
Freedom. But thou, so be it the wind and sun
That reared thy limbs and lit thy veins with life
Have blown and shone upon thee not for nought—
If these have fed and fired thy spirit as mine
With love, with faith that casts out fear, with joy,
With trust in truth and pride in trust—if thou
Be theirs indeed as theirs am I, with me
Shalt thou take part and with my sea-folk—aye,
Make thine eyes wide and give God wondering thanks
That grace like ours is given thee—thou shalt bear
Part of our praise for ever.

BERTUCCIO.

Praise or blame,
And ruinous fall or radiant rise, for me
With you shall be as one thing. I am yours.
The man I am you made me, and may shape
The man I shall be.

Re-enter the Admiral, with CALENDARO and ISRAELLO.

FALIERO.

Welcome, sirs ; ye find
A fellow-servant, and your comrade now

In fellowship of wrong, not hopeless yet
To call you, if your will stretch wing with mine,
Friends, citizens, and brethren. This our friend
Hath given you by my charge to know of me
Thus much, that if your ends and mine be one,
As one our wrongs are, and this people's need
One, toward the goal forefelt of our desire
No heart shall beat, no foot shall press, no hand
Strain, strive, and strike with steadier will than mine
And faith more strenuous toward the purpose. This
If ye believe not, here our hope hath end ;
If ye believe, here under happier stars
Begins the date of Venice.

CALENDARO.

I believe

Not more in God's word than in yours ; and this
Not for your station's sake, nor yet your fame's,
How high soe'er the wind of war have blown
The splendour of your standard : but, my lord,
Your face and heart and speech, being one, require
Of any not base-born and servile-souled
Faith : and my faith I give you.

ISRAELLO.

Sir, and I,
Who know as all men know you wise in war,
Put trust in wisdom tried so long, and found
So strong for service ever.

FALIERO.

Then, no more
Hath hope so high as ours is need of words
To rear it higher or set more steadfast. This
Remains, that being in purpose strong to strike
We take but counsel where and how the stroke
May sharpest fall and surest. Sirs, for me
In all keen ventures tried of strength and chance
The briefest rede and boldest hath been best.
We, that would purge the state of poisoned blood,
Need now but mark its hour for blood-letting,
And where to prick the swollen and virulent vein
That feeds most full this deep distemperature
Whence half the heart of Venice rots. These men
That steer the state with violent hand awry—
These rather that bind fast the steersman's hand,
Baffle and blind him, while the veering stem
Reels deathward—they or she must utterly
Perish : the wind blows higher through this red heaven
Than when a ship may save herself, yet fling
Less by the board of all her lading, now
Found worthless, than may lighten her indeed.
What think you? may this plague be thoroughly purged,
And one of these our lords who trample us
Live? Are ye men that take this burden up,
And think with half a hand to bear it through
Or wear it like a feather? If ye will,
Ye may be free, red-handed from revenge,
Or keep white hands, be slaves, and slumber : I
Will serve no more, nor sleep dishonoured.

CALENDARO.

Sir,

For one wrong done you, being but man as we,
If wrath make lightning of your life, in us,
For all wrongs done of all our lords alive
Through all our years of living, doubt you not
But wrath shall climb as high toward heaven, and hang
As hot with hope of thunder.

ISRAELLO.

Not to me

Can justice ever seem too just, or steer
Too straight ahead on vengeance : but we need
The helmsman's eye to run before his hand,
The captain's tongue to bid us whither.

FALIERO.

You,

Sir admiral, spake but late of one to me
Who lacking not the will should lack not power
To carve this monstrous quarry limb from limb
And give its flesh for beasts less vile to feed ;
Spake you not somewise thus ?

ADMIRAL.

Ay, verily—seeing

Heart, as I deemed, in you, sir, toward the work ;
And, seeing it yet, still say so.

FALIERO.

Men have seen

Worse, and have rashlier spoken, yet have won
Praise for sharp sight and judgment. Friends, meseems
Yet none of you will say that in this cause
We lack no larger counsel than our own,
No further scope of foresight, though the path
Be ne'er so strait and secret : foot and eye
Must keep, for all this close and narrow way,
The vantage yet of outlook far and free
Lest in the darkness where our snares are set
Ourselves be trapped as wolves by twilight.

ADMIRAL.

Sir,

Some six or seven I wot of, being called in
To single counsel severally, shall give
Each man, so please you, judgment on the mean
That may be found for present action.

FALIERO.

This

The rudest march of rough-shod strategy
Could push not past and miss it, that we need
Ere noon or night may crown conspiracy
Not six or seven to post about the squares
But some sixteen or seventeen chiefs elect,
With each some forty swordsmen at his back
Well weaponed and arrayed, but held in doubt,
Even till the perfect hour strike, on what end
Their enterprise is bent and bound : and these,
When dawns the night or day determined, shall

At signal given fall here and there in fray,
With stormy semblance made of casual strife
To right and left enkindling : so shall I
Find instant cause or plea to bid the bells
Toll summons from St. Mark's, and they thereon
To press from all sides in and every street
Down toward the church ; where, finding these our
 lords

And all chief ministers of the common wrong
Who stand chief princes of the common weal
Drawn forth by fear together to demand
Whence thus leaps forth such riotous noise by night,
Full may they fall upon them unaware
And drive on heaps and slay them.

BERTUCCIO.

Sir—

FALIERO.

What says

Our nephew—sworn so late upon our side
Deep as man's faith may pledge him? Does the charge
Mislike thee? Didst thou lie, or didst thou not
Swear?

BERTUCCIO.

Sir, to no such enterprise I swore
As treads through blood of blameless men toward ends
Whereof I wist not ; nor, though these be pure,
To me may general slaughter seem absolved
Or by their grace transfigured and redeemed
From damnable to righteous. Nay, my lord,

Reply not as your eyes make answer : I
Take back no word of all I said, and now
Reiterate, seeing they need reiteration : nought
That you shall bid me, not though God forbid,
Will I not, if I may, do : but what end,
How high soe'er and single-eyed, can bid
Spill innocent blood, and stand up spotless ? Think,
As these men should, being pure of purpose—think
If truth or trust or freedom, righteousness,
Faith, reverence, love, or loyalty, be fruits
That burst or burgeon from so dire a seed
As were in these rebellion, and in you
Treason.

FALIERO.

Treason ?

BERTUCCIO.

The word should scare you not,
If not this enterprise may scare you.

ISRAELLO.

Duke,
Strange ears, it seems, have caught our counsel.

CALENDARO.

Peace :

Howe'er the strife of counsels end, we stand
Safe : here is yet no traitor.

BERTUCCIO.

He that holds
His life in fear of me may hold it safe

As I will hold mine honour. Sir, what end,
(*To Faliero.*)

Though this device should drink not innocent blood,
And violence fall not save on wrongdoers' heads,
What end shall come of this red enterprise,
What fruit of such a root as bears for flower
Carnage that strikes by midnight?

ISRAELLO.

First for us
Justice, and next for him who doth us right
A crown.

BERTUCCIO.

A crown, and justice? night and day
Shall first be yoked together.

CALENDARO.

Truth is that :
If right and wrong engender, they bring forth
No true-begotten offspring.

BERTUCCIO.

Sir, can you
Hear and keep silence when a citizen born
Of Venice proffers you for hire of blood,
For price of death dealt and a darkling blow,
Kingship?

FALIERO.

It was not well said—no, nor thought—
Of any, born republican,—albeit

The commonweal be cankered now at core—
That healing even for plaguespots might be found
In such a leper's bed as monarchy
Keeps warm with prostitution, till therein
A people's lifeblood, foul with sloth and shame,
Rot round its heart and perish.

ISRAELLO.

I would have you
Reign but as first of citizens, and see
Crowned in your name the people.

FALIERO.

Good my friend,
The foulest reigns whence ever earth smelt foul
When all her wastes and cities reeked of Rome
Were by that poisonous plea sown, watered, fed :
The worst called emperors ever, kings whose names
Serve even for slaves to curse with, lived by vote
And shone by delegation. We desire
For all men who desire not wrong to man
Freedom : but save for love's sake and the right's
Freedom to serve hath no man.

ISRAELLO.

Love should give
Right to the crowned redeemer of the state
To bid men serve for thankfulness and love
The man who did them service.

FALIERO.

And to them

Right to bow down, and serve, and abdicate
Manhood? Not God could give man, though he would,
Power to do this, and right to live : for they
That so should cast off manfulness, and tread
Their birthright out in blood or trampled mire,
Could claim, being men, but right to kill and die,
Or live, being thralls, as beasts that feed and groan
Till death release them into dust. No more.
To serve and reign for me were shame alike,
And for my masters or my slaves no less,
Inseparable and reverberate, crime from crime
And shame on shame for ever.

ADMIRAL.

Sir, well said.

CALENDARO.

Ay, and well done : such words are deeds, and wear
Swords girt for service on them.

FALIERO.

Yet of these
And all words else enough is ours and more,
If very swords be slower to speak than they.
Ye have my mind, I yours : remains but this,
That each betake him toward his office.

ADMIRAL.

Sir,

Farewell awhile we bid you, giving God
Thanks that he gives us and so great a cause
A chief whose heart is great as it.

FALIERO.

Farewell.

[*Exeunt Admiral, Calendaro, and Israello.*]

And how may this now please thee? Have I said
Ill?

BERTUCCIO.

No, my lord.

FALIERO.

Or shall not we do well
To raise up Venice from the dust wherein
Men trample down her servants, and to bring
All haughtiest heads and highest of tyrants down
Thither?

BERTUCCIO.

My lord, it may be.

FALIERO.

Nay, by God,
Thou art older and colder of spirit and blood than I;
I am hoar of head, but thou, thou art sere at heart,
And grey in soul as fearful forethought makes
Old men whom time bows lowlier down than me.
What yet of this mislikes thee? Wouldst thou make
The rough ways plain for freedom's feet, yet spare
Tyrants?

BERTUCCIO.

Of all this blood that shall be shed,
If none indeed be taintless, I would spare
No drop that knows infection: but, my sire,
Who dares say this?

FALIERO.

I.

BERTUCCIO.

Nay, not you, but wrath,
Your wrath it is that says so.

FALIERO.

No : for proof
With iron tongues innumerable echoing me
Cries out upon the house-tops, fills and thrills
Streets, bridges, squares, with shame from roof to roof
Reverberated resounding as to toll
The deep death-knell of honour. None there is,
Not one that in this wrongdoing bears not part,
Not one but we in Venice, we whose hands
Are pledged to quench in blood this funeral fire
That else will burn up justice, courage, faith,
And leave but shame alive and vileness free
And cowardice crowned as conqueror. Here she lies,
Our mother, mightiest late of all things throned
And hailed of earth as heavenly, naked, soiled,
Mocked, scourged, and spat on : not her first of sons
And not her last escapes, evades, eschews
Communion in one sacrament of shame,
Partakes not, pledges not the wine of wrong,
The bread of outrage : first and last are one :
Bound of base hands down on her pyre alive,
Fast bound with iron and with infamy,
Our commonweal groans, knowing herself a thing

For slaves and kings to scoff at. Shall this be
With thy goodwill for ever? Not with mine
Shall it; nay, not though scarce a tithe were left
When justice hath fulfilled her fiery doom
Again to build up Venice.

BERTUCCIO.

Who shall build
On graves and ashes, out of fire and blood,
Or citadel or temple? Where on earth,
For man what stronghold, or what shrine for God,
Rose ever so from ruin?

FALIERO.

Rome—if Rome
Lie not—was built on innocent blood: and here
No fratricidal auspice shall renew
Life, but a sacrificial sign again
Inaugurate Venice for her sons to praise
And all the world to worship. These are not
Brethren, nor men nor sons of men are these,
But worms that creep and couple, soil and sting,
Whose blood though foul shall purge pollution hence
And leave the shore clean as the sea. Would God
Their hour to-night could ere its natural time
Ring from St. Mark's, albeit the bell that struck
Rang me to rest for ever! I shall sleep
Thereafter, sound as triumph or as death
That strikes, and seals up triumph.

BERTUCCIO.

Sir, I know,

If by strange hap my sire could err, with him
For me to err were better, even to death,
Defeat, dispraise, and all that darkens death,
Than swerving from his side to shine, and live
Acclaimed of all men's praises. Be your will
Done : for as God's your will shall be for me
A stronghold and a safeguard though I die. [*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A cabinet in the palace of Lioni.**Enter LIONI and BELTRAMO.*

LIONI.

Speak now, then : here at least is none but I.
Speak.

BELTRAMO.

Sir, you dream not what you bid me do.

LIONI.

By good St. Mark, not I : but this should be
Some honest thing, or hardly wouldst thou dare
So thrust and press upon me.

BELTRAMO.

No, my lord.

I doubt it is not.

LIONI.

Get thee hence, then : out :

Is there no room for all dishonest works
In all the range of Venice, that a knave
Must make me closet counsellor with him,
Here emptying forth his knavery? By this light,
I think thou art here belated, mad with wine
Or drunk with brawling: yet again I think
Thou darest not thus abuse me.

BELTRAMO.

Sir, I dare
Nor hold my peace nor hardly speak; yet this
I cannot but beseech you to believe,
That if between two doubts I hang distraught
The stronger cause that plucks me by the heart
Is care and duty toward you, born of love;
The weaker, half disrooted now, constrains
My conscience yet for shame's sake; which nathless
I needs must here cast off me. Sir, you know
How yet no long time since it is that we
Communed of matters held for me too high,
Of unendurable evil endured, of wrong
Whence all men's hearts were wasted as with fire,
Of hope that helped not, patience grey with pain,
Long-suffering sick to death, and violence roused
To range among the violent: dangerous dreams
Whereof your wisdom, though with temperate words,
Rebuking them, chastised me: whence, my lord,
I come to shew you now what seed hath sprung
To what swift height and amplitude of doom
Far overshadowing Venice. You desired

A sign, as they that knew not Christ, and lo,
My lord, a sign I bring you. Twelve hours more
Shall see this moon of April half burnt out
And half the squares and highways of this town
A sea of blood full foaming toward the verge
Where it shall meet our natural sea, and bid
Her waters, widening over bank and bridge,
Swell strong with storm of murder's making. This
May none avert : God wills it : man desires
And shall by God's grace do it : but you, my lord,
Keep from those ways your foot at dawn, albeit
The cry be raised of enemies at our gates,
Of Genoa round our port in sail ; and keep
Your lifeblood from that torrent which shall drown
All palaces else that shall by dawn send forth
Their lords at summons sounded from St. Mark's :
And so, as now through me, God save you.

LIONI.

Stay.

Thou didst not think to say so and pass forth
With no more question, scathless ?

BELTRAMO.

Good my lord,

This did I think, that from your noble hand,
In quittance of my deep devotion shown
At risk and rate of honour and of life
To keep your head unscathed, I should not find
Disgrace for guerdon, or for thanksgiving
Death.

LIONI.

Art thou all made up of words, and hast
No thought that runs not loose upon thy tongue
To tell thee such a warning given as thine
Can die not out within mine ear, and leave
Unwarned of peril, if peril indeed there be,
Venice?

BELTRAMO.

I would but do you service.

LIONI.

Thanks.

A worthy service were it, my worthy friend,
Of me and thee, that thou shouldst bid me crawl
Aside from general ruin of all the state,
And I should grovel at thy beck, and creep
Darkling away from danger. What is this
That under a flickering veil of vehement words
Thou shewest and wilt not shew me?

BELTRAMO.

Death, I say :

Death.

LIONI.

If I knew thee not no coward or cur,
Tonight I should misknow thee. Night and day
Is death not still about us, here and there,
Alive around the ways and hours of life,
That what we think or what we are fain to do

We should not do for death's sake? How these
 knaves,
Whose life is service or rebellion, fear
Death ! and a child high-born would shame them.

BELTRAMO.

If

Death seem so gracious in a great man's eye,
Die, my lord : I, too mean to live your friend,
Am not your murderer.

LIONI.

 Nay, nor any man's,
If I can stay thine hand betimes. I would not
By force withhold thee, nor by violence wring
What yet thou hast left unspoken forth : but hence
Thou goest not out, and I left ignorant here
What purpose haled thee hither.

BELTRAMO.

 Why, to you
Friendship ; and haply hate to no man else
Of all now damned alive to darkness.

LIONI.

Good :

The slot is hot : I scent the quarry. So,
Some certain of thy kind are bound and sworn
To do the ignoble and the poor man right
By murderous justice done on us, who wrong
Our fellow-folk with flaunt of wicked wealth

And vex their baseness with nobility?
And with our Doge's blood and ours ye would
Make ripe that harvest, fill that winepress full,
Which now not fifty years from this, ye know,
Dolcino thought to reap and tread, and bring
Equal and simple rule of right again
Among us called by Christ's name here on earth—
And how he died remembering, inch from inch
Rent living with red iron, and his bride
Burnt limb from limb before his eyes, thou wouldst
Eschew such end as theirs was?

BELTRAMO.

Twice, my lord,
You have erred : I stand not here to save myself ;
Nor stands our lord the Doge in danger yet,
If he that hears me speak love honour.

LIONI.

Nay,
But if this be not wine that swells thy speech,
No less it is than murderous madness. How
May death stretch wing above all heads of ours
And shadow not our master's ? Him, of all
High-born in Venice, should conspiracy
First menace, risen from darkness such as broods
About such hearts as hate us. If thou be
Mad, be not yet thine own self-murderer : think—
For wine it is not that is wild in thee—
What peril even the least of all thy words,
If here thou pause, hath pulled upon thee.

BELTRAMO.

That

Had I cast thought on, here I should not be—
Nor Lioni, nor the noblest born my lord,
Have power or breath to threaten or implore
Me, nor the least in Venice.

LIONI.

Friend, from me

Nor threat nor prayer need any fear or hope
Who feeds on air and sunshine ; least of all
Thou : for of all men bred of baser kind,
Could I perchance fear any, thee at least
I could not, having called thee friend : for one
Who doubts or fears or dreams ingratitude,
Or holds for possible disloyalty,
Stands proven in sight of his own secret soul
As possibly, should chance or time prevail,
Disloyal and ungrateful. Such was I,
If man may say so, never : yet meseems
That unproved of cowardice I may crave
To know, hadst thou been haply less my friend,
How should mine hand have lost the power it hath,
My lips lacked breath to question thee? or how
Should not the Doge, being our lord of lords,
Incarnate and impersonate Venice, bear
Part in our general danger?

BELTRAMO.

Nay, my lord,

I said not that ; part shall he bear therein,
God wot, and unendangered. Please you, sir,—
Please it your pride and pure nobility—
To spare your smile and shrug—give so much ease,
This hour, to lip and shoulder—I would say
What, being derided and endured—forborne,
Insulted, and forgiven,—it might not please
Your servant for your scornful sake to say.
You will not ask me, what?

LIONI.

Assuredly,

No.

BELTRAMO.

Speak, then, and be cursed of God and man,
You bid me, who forbear to bid me.

LIONI.

I

But bid thee now no longer hold me here
Awake and vexed with vehement speech wherein
If aught be honest nought is clear enough
To speak thee sound of wits : and didst thou so,
Of God and man forgiveness might I win
If I should bid God curse thee, and my men
Lead forth or thrust thee from my gates. Were this
For me—the word still twittering on thy tongue—
Death?

BELTRAMO.

Yea, my lord : and death for all your kin.

LIONI.

By Christ, but this is fiery wine indeed
That speaks in thee so steadfast. Wouldst thou not
Sleep?

BELTRAMO.

Soon and sound enough will you, my lord,
Sleep, if my speech be slighted, that I speak
Out of true heart and thankfulness.

LIONI.

And where,
When thus by night red riot runs and reels
And murder rides out revelling, where shall be
The keepers of our state? where, first of all,
The Doge?

BELTRAMO.

They that keep our state so well
That only force can purge it—they shall be
Where sheep and oxen, fowl and fish are found,
When some great feast is toward and guests come in—
Dead on a heap : and he, their lord and ours—
Where think you, sir?

LIONI.

Nay, man, God knows, not I :
First be it or last of all the sacrifice,
Where the old man falls, there lies a brave man slain—
Head, hand, and heart of Venice.

BELTRAMO.

He shall be

Where when a fight is won the general stands
Red-footed and red-handed and brow-bound
With bays that drip down blood.

LIONI.

Your captain?

BELTRAMO.

Ay.

Believe me not, and perish.

LIONI.

I am more like
To live, and see thee whipped or hanged, and not
Believe thee.

BELTRAMO.

Choose : I have given you, sir, the chance
That none but one of all your kind is given :
Cast from your hand your luck and life, you die,
Self-slaughtered : on your head, not mine, the charge
Lies of your bloodshed.

LIONI.

Man, if this be truth,
The sun may reel from heaven, and darkness rise
For dawn upon the world.

BELTRAMO.

I cannot tell.
They say such things have been, sir.

LIONI.

Nay, but none

Like this: Faliero captain of thy crew?

Thine?

BELTRAMO.

Ay, my lord, we are despicable—and he
A man despised as we are, and most of all,
Being highest in place; more grievous and more gross
Is thence his wrong, and keener thence the shame
That gnaws his heart away with fangs of fire.

LIONI.

And he, to be revenged of us,—of them
Who spared a hound the halter, not the scourge—
Hath leagued himself, thou sayest, with knaves by night
To wash the ways with slaughter—set a knife
To the open throat of sleep—break trust, slay faith,
Strike through the heart of honour? stab the law,
Set for his mother a snare to strangle her,
Work miracles of murder? change a name
That now rings out a clarion in men's ears
For one that hisses like a snake, and means
Treason?

BELTRAMO.

Sir, were it but for his behoof,
To feed his own lusts fat with gold and blood,
Gird his own brows with empire, steal, stab, lie,
And reign, abhorred and abject, over swine
That once were men, but changed their heart and head
To grovel, snout and groin, in slavery—then
Shame were it indeed, and shameful change, for him,

Being man, to shed man's innocent blood, break faith,
And spit at God, and triumph, and be damned
More deep than Cain with Judas, and his grave
For guerdon take the spittle and the spurns
Of all true men for ever : but the lord
Who leads us forth of bondage, though he lead
Through this red sea, struck no more loyal stroke
With heart more single or hand more honest once
Off Istria, nor at Zara.

LIONI.

Once? ay, twice,
Our lord was found our saviour ; now, if this
Be monstrous truth thou tell'st me, he, grown hoar
With glorious years and works, would leave his name
A traitor's, red and foul for ever. Nay,
But if this be no drunken dream or lie
No plea can cleanse him of the murderous taint
That reeks from names abominable of man
As manslaughterers of their brethren.

BELTRAMO.

Sir, if Cain
Be smitten again of Abel ere he die,
Shall Abel stand attainted on this charge
As fratricide or traitor?

LIONI.

Why, my friend,
I lack the lawyer's wit and tongue to prate
As advocate against thee : this is all
I can, to assure myself and heaven and thee

That this destruction thou wouldst bid me shun
Shall ere it fall on us be stayed. Reply
Not now, nor here : for hence thou goest not out
Till I tonight have communed with the lords
Nasoni and Cornaro, who shall make
Sharp inquisition of thy news and thee
Here, ere the council meet, and lay strict hand
On all found part of this conspiracy
Or like to dip red hands in danger, when
Strange darkness rides in the air, and strange design
Makes hot men's hearts with hope of evil. Thou
Shalt rest unhurt ; but we will know of thee
All needful for prevention.

BELTRAMO.

Christ our Lord

Knows—

LIONI.

That nor threat nor rack shall wring from thee
One word beyond thy will : so be it : I think
All we could win or wish of thee shall need
Nor force nor menace, promise, price, nor prayer,
To press forth easily as a grape gives wine.
Thou art tender-souled and honest, thankful, true,
A gentle knave and worthy : what is said
Unsay thou canst not, nor undo the deed
Done when thy footfall smote my threshold. So,
Be patient : this alone thou lackest : wait
And keep close lips till I come back.

BELTRAMO.

My lord—

LIONI.

My lord and thine is God, who led thee here
To save the world this ill, that day should be
And not this city—that the sun should rise
And see not Venice. How, by whom or whence,
Thou knewest of this—what part thou shouldst have
played

On this full stage of death, had no remorse
With timely pity toward me pricked thine heart—
I ask thee not : to them that I bring back,
Not me, shalt thou make answer. I would lay
No force upon thee more than needs : but here
Fast under guard abiding till they come
Safe shalt thou rest as Venice now through thee.

[*Exeunt.*]SCENE II.—*The balcony of the ducal palace.*

FALIERO and BERTUCCIO.

FALIERO.

Dawn—is it yet not dawn? Thine eyes, being young,
Are dazed with timeless waking ; mine, that looked,
Ere thine saw birth, on battle, yet have strength
To outwatch the vigil of a boy's, and tell
Sunrise from set of stars or moonfall. See !
Light—is not light there ?

BERTUCCIO.

Sir, if time speak true,
It lacks an hour to sunrise : holier lights
Are these that hold procession through the square
With chants of penitence to churchward, timed
To match the death of darkness.

FALIERO.

Didst thou think
God haply was not with us, that thy smile
Should mock their chant or me? Nay, thee he sends
This token in his witness : I desired
None : but if God be no unrighteous God,
And hold us fatherlike in keeping, here
Might man believe a comfortable sign
Sent as with sacred and superb acclaim
To match the death indeed of darkness, left
Too long upon the waters. Dawn shall be,
Thou sayest, an hour from hence : I know not : if,
By death of mine and thine and all we love,
Dawn verily in an hour might rise, and rest
As once on Rome, an agelong daylight—boy,
Wouldst thou, having thy fair long life to give,
Thy fair long life that should be, spare or shrink
Or grudge or groan to cast it from thine hand
As might a child a pebble, more than I
To give my thin-spun days and nights of life
Left, which I stake and smile at?

BERTUCCIO.

No, my lord :

If God know aught of man or man know aught,
God knows I know I would not.

FALIERO.

Yea, and I

Know it : God love thee as I love, my boy,
For this we know of thee. And this do thou
Know likewise, and hold fast : that if today
Dawn rise not, but the darkness drift us down,
And leave our hopes as wrecks and waifs despised
Of men that walk by daylight, not with us
Shall faith decline from earth or justice end,
Or freedom, which if dead should bid them die,
Rot, though the works and very names of us,
And all the fruit we looked for, nipped of winds
And gnawn of worms, and all the stem that bore,
And all the root, wax rotten. Here shall be
Freedom, or never in this time-weary world
Justice ; nor ever shall the sunrise know
A sight to match the morning, nor the sea
Hear from the sound of living souls on earth,
Free as her foam, and righteous as her tides,
Just, equal, awless, perfect, even as she,
A word to match her music. If we fail,
We are even but we—I, thou, and these our friends
That rise or fall beside us : if we thrive,
Not I and thou and they triumph—not we
Prosper—but that which if we live or die
Alike and absolute, unhurt and whole,
Endures, being proven of our mortalities

Immortal—yea, being shown by sign of loss
And token of subdued infirmity,
And ruin, and all insistence of defeat,
And laughing lips and trampling heels of men
That smile and stamp above us buried, shown
Triumphant. Righteousness alone hath right
For love of all found loveliest, freedom, truth,
Faith, reason, hope, and honour, to require
Life at our hands : and if on sand or stone
Or if on fruitful ground the life we give
Fall, shed with all our heart and full free will,
This not concerns us, this, come storm or sun,
Regards us nowise : time hath all in hand :
And time, I think, shall hurl this world to hell,
Or give—not now, perchance, nor many a year,
Nor many a century hence—God knows—but yet
Some day, some year, some century, give our sons
Freedom. Nor haply then may we deserve
Remembrance : better many a man than we
May prove himself, and perish : yet, if God
Fail us not so, that, failing, we should die
Cowards, it may be we shall sleep not scorned
Of all that hold our faith for ever. Now
Go thou and watch, but not with me, who here
Would keep my watch alone till morning. God
Be with thee. (*Exit Bertuccio.*) God? may God
indeed tonight
Be with us? Yet red-handed men of death,
Scarce breathing now from battle, praise his name,
Give thanks for happy slaughters, mix with prayer

The panting passion of their hearts that beat
Like vultures' wings toward bloodshed : and shall we
Dare not desire of God his comfort, we
That war not save with wrongs abhorred of him,
That smite not heads of open enemies, men
Found manful in the fielded front of war,
Fair foes, and worth fair fighting, but of slaves
Who mar the name they mock with reverence, make
The fair fame foul of freedom, soil and stain
The seamless robe wherein their fathers clothed
For bridal of one bridegroom with the sea
Venice? When time hath wiped her tyrants out—
Time that now ripening thrusts into mine hand
The scythe to reap this harvest—earth has known
Never, since life sprang first against the sun,
So fair, so splendid, so sublime a life
As this that God shall give her : and to me,
To me and mine who served and saved her, life
Shall God give surely, such as dateless time
Spares, and its light puts out the shadow of death.

(Voices chanting from below.)

Quis tam celer, quis tam fortis,

Pedem qui præcurrat mortis?

Quis e fractis tumbæ portis

Præter unum redeat?

Præter unum Te reversus

Nemo, Christe, solem versus,

Mortis fluctu semel mersus,

Surget, sol dum cælo stat.

FALIERO.

Yea, but if many waters cannot quench
Love, nor the strong floods drown it, how shall not
Man's love for man, that saves and smites, to bring
For every slave deliverance, and for all
The peace of equal righteousness and right,
Though girt with even this iron girdle round
And robed in this red raiment, rise again
And as a swimmer against a sundering wave
Beat back the billow of death, and climb, and laugh
Loud laughters of thanksgiving? Strong is death,
But stronger lives man's love who dies for man
Than all ye fear and trust in, heaven or hell.

(*Chanting again.*)

*De profundis tenebrarum
Ardor atrox animarum
Quas non legum vis tuarum,
Christe, fecit humiles,
Ex infernis in superna
Fervet: quem cum lux æterna
Tangit, fit ut herba verna
Quam conculcat vulgi pes.*

FALIERO.

O tender laws of bland humility
Wherewith priests' hearts are girdled! These are they
Who drink and eat God, and who kiss and stroke
Satan; who burn men's living limbs with fire
And hold themselves God's chosen and blest of God

And me of God rejected and accursed
Because in wrath long since I smote a priest
Who bore in hand God palpable, whereon
The curse of the eucharist I violated,
And of God's blessing made myself a curse,
Fell or shall one day fall and smite me. Nay,
If humbleness to these must buy men heaven,
Let all high hope stand outcast thence with me.

(Chanting again.)

*Virgo sancta, Christe clemens,
Homo miser, homo demens,
Ubi Sathanas it semens,
Hunc secutus, nescit vos ;
Mortis messor, edax vitæ,
Spernit vos : at vos auditæ
Preces animæ contritæ
Flectant : nam quid sumus nos ?*

FALIERO.

Not men, God knows, are ye nor any of you,
Priests, and the flocks of priesthood : sheep or swine
Or wolves at heart man finds you. Christ our Lord
Chief light and lord of men, made manifest
Before no bloodier judgment-seat than yours
Man, and the son of man—no lord of priests,
No God of slaves who hears their tyrants pray,
And sees them, praying, smite earth and strengthen
hell,

And hallows hell with blessing—he, being just,
 Should think, if he be God indeed, and hear
 Me now and all men away, if this word
 Be bearable, that man, being smitten, should
 Still turn his cheek and smite not. Nay, but, Lord,
 Hadst thou been mere man, even as I, and borne
 Shame, knowing thyself no God, whom no man's
 hand

Could turn indeed to a thing dishonoured—nay,
 But one whom shame might scourge and scar like me,
 Brand on thy brows and ravin round thine heart—
 Thou, that couldst bear for us the body's death,
 Thou couldst not, Christ, have borne it: hadst thou
 borne,

Not higher of heart but less thou hadst been than we.

(Chanting again.)

*Fac ut metatmali sator
 Mali messem, mundi Stator,
 Une, trine, tu Creator,
 Pater, Fili, Spiritus:
 Tuque, boni nobis bone
 Dator, Marce, tu patrone,
 Ab inferno nos latrone,
 Salva nos ab hostibus.*

FALIERO.

And I, for these a hellish thief in wait,
 A midnight-mantled slayer—for these am I
 Their headsman, I that was their head: but thou,

St. Mark, our lord, no better friend than I,
Not thou, not thou, to Venice. Have not these
Been sowers indeed of evil, and shall they reap
For harvest of a desolated field
Good? Have they not made wide the wilderness,
Kept fresh with blood the roots of tares and thorns,
Drawn dry the breasts of pale sterility,
Wasted the ways with fire and sown with salt,
That they should gather grain? Our foes are these,
Not Genoa, not the stranger, south nor east,
Turk nor Hungarian, but thy sons alone,
Venice, who mock their mother : thine it is,
Thine hand by mine that smites them, and redeems
Thine equal name for ever, lest the world
Lack this that none as thou shalt give hath given,
The light of equal manhood's equity,
Full freedom, sovereign where no sovereign sits.
But wilt not thou speak yet, Mark? From thy tongue
Time is it now the word should break, that sounds
To them that do thee this dishonour death
And loftier life to Venice : yet not yet
Thy belfry through the sleep of tyrants flings
The knell that is a clarion, and mine ear
Takes only through the gleaming April gloom
That rustle of whispering water against the dawn
Which wakes before the world may. Wind is none
To warn our watery streets of storm, which here
Broods windward, hard on breaking ; if ye wist,
Friends !—Will the prayers of priests not wake thee,
then ?

(*Chanting again.*)

*Te, cùm timor barbarorum
Corda conflictavit, horum
Turba prima te tuorum
Conclamabant Veneti :
Te, sub umbrâ Christi crucis,
Fontem te videmus lucis ;
Tanti stas tutamen ducis,
Tanti fautor populi.*

FALIERO.

Ay, for no poor faint people shalt thou speak,
For no mean city : lion-like shall they,
With feet once loosened from the strangling toils,
Go forth to plant thy lion. But the duke,
The leader, red of hand and hoar of hair,
An old man clothed in slaughters—but the chief,
Worthy worship and honour once of all,
I, Marino Faliero, citizen,
Soldier, servant of Venice—how shall I
Follow, with feet washed here in civic blood,
The flag once more by civic hearts and hands
Exalted ? Nay, the fugitive feet that here
Found harbourage first, the feeble knees that fell,
Suppliant, and maimed with fear of foes behind,
Imploring first thy comfort, when the Hun
Raged as a fire against them—nay, the hands
That first here staked a camp in the eastward sea,

Trembling, and toward thine emblem and thy Lord's
Uplift with wail and worship—these that first
Scarce here gat rest and refuge where to die
Were worthier yet to found than I may be
To rear again from ruin Venice. O,
That thou wouldst pray God for me now tonight
To speed the wheels of morning! Will this hour
Stretch not its darkness out to noon, and bid
The day lie dumb, lest when the morning speaks
Death answer with a cry from clamorous hell
And strike the sun down darkling, that the world
May reel in fearful travail out of life?

(*Chanting again.*)

*Mors immanis, mors immensa,
Tendit fila semper tensa ;
Illi regum sordet mensa,
Illi vana ducum vox :
Mors immensa, mors immanis,
Instat rebus mundi vanis ;
Fugit claris lux e fanis,
Mors cùm dixit, Fiat nox.*

FALIERO.

Let there be night, and there was night—who says
That? Nay, though heaven and earth were they that
bade,
No less were light immortal, night no less

Fugitive, abject, void, vain, outcast, frail,
In the eye of dawn that seeks and sees not night.
Vain if my voice be, vainer yet are these
That swell from choral throats the choir of death
With prostrate noise of praises ; vain as fear,
Penitence, passion, ache of afterthought,
When man hath once laid hand on high design
And armed his heart with purpose. Death and life
In God's clear eyes are one thing, wrong and right
Are twain for ever : nor though night kiss day
Shall right kiss wrong and die not. Let the world
End ; if the spirit expire not, then in mine
The will that gave wing to this enterprise
Shall fade not, nor the trust I had alive
To serve not wrath but righteousness at last
With offering shed of sin for sacrifice.
Was I not chosen as helmsman of my state,
As herdsman of my people ? Woe were mine
If when the dogs turn wolves to rend the sheep
I durst not drown or hang them, with their jaws
Yet foul and full of flesh and wet red fleece,
Or when the ship reels right and left on death,
Storm-stunned, and loud with mutiny as with fear,
Would ease her not of mutinous rioters, fain
To bind me foot and hand, and bid the wheel
Swing as the storm wills till the tumbling prow
Plunge, and dive, and the wreck bear down the crew
And them, still drunk with rage of revel, whence
No sunken state rose ever. Let them live
And all this people perish ? God, not I.

(Chanting again.)

*Miserere, Pastor vere,
Pastor clemens, miserere,
Sere iudex, ultor sere,
Deus magne, Deus mi:
Quanquam plena vanitatis,
Fracta vi, laborat ratis,
Miserere civitatis,
Miserere domini.*

FALIERO.

Yea, pity and mercy need we both—of man
They that of man shall find not, and of God
I, that may haply find it. Vanity
Too vain indeed for men most frail of soul
Were this, that one of fourscore years should dream
To twine himself with trembling treasonous hands
False wreaths of timeless triumph, steal the crown
By freedom woven about his country's head
To change its green leaf into gold, and wear
A diadem's weight brow-bound of empire, till,
Some three days thence, death, laughing broad and
blind,
Laid hand upon his bloodred hand, and led
To hell the hoar head and the murderous heart,
For three days' kingdom's sake perpetually
Damned, and dishonoured. Never man that sinned,
Traitor nor tyrant, thief nor manslayer, none,

Did thus, nor would, being less than mad with sin—
Not Nero, nor Iscariot. I nor mine
By this may thrive more than the meanest born
That plies his oar in Venice. One for all
Strikes, that for each man all his brethren may
Think, speak, and strike hereafter. Shall not this
Be? for the woful warning song of wail
Hath ended, and the new song only heard
Is now the sun's at sundawn. Now, St. Mark,
Speak! for thine hour, even thine, it is that strikes,
First hour of this first day that sees thy sons
Free, father, as thy soul is free in heaven,
With no man's shadow cast on them but thine.
Why should the sun keep silence here? thou seest,
Night seals not up for us the lips of light
As on the downward verge of hell: and thou,
Why should thy tongue be sealed, and all our hope
Perish, as might some heartless bondman's, worn
With wasting sloth and patience? Night and hell,
With all their mortal ministers in man,
Shame, doubt, and base endurance, force and fear,
Cold heart, and abject custom, these are they
That fight against us: fain, with all this aid,
Fain would night thrust us back and bind us fast
Where no man hears the sun's word: nor may these
By harmless hands be fought with, nor subdued
With bloodless or with blameless weapons: yet,
If hell be here not yet, ere man make earth
Hell, here today the sun should speak, and thou
Make answer, Mark, and help us. Yea, for here

Night hath not put the sun to silence : dawn
Speaks : and we lack but one loud word from thee.

Enter an Officer with Guards.

OFFICER

My lord, you are prisoner of the state, and mine.

FALIERO.

Thine ! Does my nephew live ?

OFFICER.

He lives as you—

Prisoner.

FALIERO.

I think I am overwatched, and thou
Part of the dream I walk in unaware—
A thing made out of slumber. Many a night
I have slept but ill—never so sound as this.
Why tolls the bell not from St. Mark's ?

OFFICER.

My lord,

By mandate of the sovereign council met
The warden of the bell-tower had in charge
To see that none should sound the bells today.
The gates are fastened of the palace square :
The Ten, with twenty chosen in aid of them
Forth of the chiefest of the state, are set
To judge the prisoners even this hour attain²⁰t
On mortal charge of murderous treason.

FALIERO.

If

True men be they that shall arraign me, I
May stand in sooth approved their traitor.

OFFICER.

Sir,

For your sole name's sake is it of all the rest
That this new court of judgment sits, to speak
On this great cause no common sentence.

FALIERO.

No :

Strange court, and stranger trial, and most of all
Strange will the strange court's judgment held today
Read where it stands on record. Good my friend,
I will not trouble thee nor vex thy lords
With tarriance nor with wrangling : I desire
Nothing of man, nor aught of God save peace.
I shall not lack it long : yet would I say
Perchance a word before I die, because
I have loved this city. Lead me where they sit
That I may stand and speak my soul and go :
The rest is death's and God's : if these be just,
Judge they between us, and their will be mine.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*The Hall of the Council of Ten.*BENINTENDE *and Senators sitting. Enter FALIERO, guarded.*

BENINTENDE.

Justice has given her doom against the accused,
Israello and Calendaro : they that fled
To Chioggia lie in ward, and hence await
An equal sentence : this remains, to speak
Judgment on him, the guiltiest head of all
And murderous heart of this conspiracy,
Head once and heart of Venice, present here
To bear the award of retributive law
Laid on her traitor and your enemy. Sirs,
Is it your will to hear him answer ?

SENATORS.

Yea.

BENINTENDE.

Marin Faliero, leave is thine to speak.

FALIERO.

And leave is yours to slay me : yet for both,
Lords councillors, I thank you : most for death,
And somewhat yet for freedom given my speech.
Ye know that being your prince and thrall elect
I have lived not free, who now shall freely die ;
By doom indeed of yours, but mine own will
Rejoicingly confirms it. Fourscore years
Have given mine eyesight and my spirit of life
The sun and sea to feed on, and mine heart
This people and this city chosen of God
To love and serve, and this forlorn right hand
Some threescore of those years have given the gift
With furtherance of God's comfort and my sword's
To smite your foes and scatter, till today
I am here arraigned as deadliest of them all.
Nor verily ever stood ye, nor shall stand,
In risk so dire, and die not : yea, when death
Hangs hard above your heads as over mine
Here, and the straitened spirit abhors the flesh,
Then hardly shall their mutual severance be
Nearer : for chance or God has brought you forth
From under veriest imminence of death
And shadowing darkness of his hand uplift
And wing made wide above you. No man's head
Should God have spared, had God been one with me,
Or chance and I like-minded : that ye live,
Praise God, and not my purpose : never man
Bore mind more bent on one thing most desired,

No sinner's more on sin, no saint's on God,
Than mine with all its might and weight of will
On trust of your destruction. Hope on earth
Save this, desire of gift save this from heaven,
Had I, since first this fire was lit in me,
None : and now knowing it vain I would not live
One hour beyond your sentence. Whence or how
God kindled it against you, for of God,
I say, of God it came, ye marvel, seeing
No cause as great as my great rage of will
To rouse in me such ravin : yet, my lords,
If thirst or ever hunger gnawed man's heart,
Mine did they till your death should satiate it,
Your general death and single : yea, had God
Held in one hand forth toward me death for you,
For me perpetual penance, and in one
For you long life and paradise for me,
I had chosen, and given him thanks who gave me choice,
Revenge with hell, not heaven with pardon. Yet
Not my wrong only, not my wrath alone,
Were all that made my spirit a sword and kept
My thought a fire against you : though the wrong
Were monstrous past memorial made of man,
Past memory kept of time alive to mark
Ingratitude most memorable, and the wrath,
How sharp soe'er, not more than proves in God
By fire and fierce apocalypse of doom
Justice : for shame that smites an old man's cheek
Is as a whetted sword that cleaves his heart,
His hand, strong once, being weaponless : and mine

The shame that spat on was as fire to burn,
And mine the sword that clove was fire, and mine
The weapon that forsook had made it once
Famous. But yet I curse not God for you
That ye denied me, being the men ye were,
Redress: for had ye granted, haply then
I had died content, and never cast by chance
A thought away at hazard on the wrongs
That all men bear who bear your lordship. Now
By light and fire of mine own shame and wrong
I have seen the shames, I have read the wrongs of these
Who, free being born, and free men called by name,
Endure with me your mastery. ' This ye call
An equal weal, a general good, a thing
Divine and common, mutual and august,
Hailed by the holiest name that hallows right,
One chosen of many kingdoms, kingless—one
Not ranged among but reared above them, one
Found worth a word that whoso hears takes heart
And triumphs in his motherland, of men
Not named as theirs whose heads bow down to man,
Nor kingdom called nor empire, but acclaimed
Republic—this that all men praise as ye,
Ye only, ye dishonour. Nought is this,
To call no man of all that tread on men
King, if men call a man that walks on earth
Master, and bind about a new-born brow
Inheritance of lordship. Hand from hand
Takes, and resigns in vain, the wrongful right,
By reasonless transmission: man by man,

The imperious races, lessening toward their last,
Perish : yet power with even their last is born,
Because his mother bare him. Sirs, this law
Would wake on lips that wist not what were smiles
Laughter : but if the unreason brought not forth
Shame, haply men, the fools of patience, might
Endure it, and eschew, by luck's good leave,
Scorn : which they shall not surely who forbear
And bear what honour may not. Sirs, take note
That with men's wrongs and sufferings age on age
This blindworm custom have ye fed and made
A serpent fanged and flying, with eyes and wings,
To ravin on men's hearts. Pride, shame, sloth, lust,
Are dragons' teeth : right royally ye err
To deem that these will sting not, or that men,
No bondslaves born but citizens as ye,
Being stung, will smile and thank you. Now perchance
Would one make answer, saying I too was born
Not least of all nor less than any of you
Noble, but heir of place as proud as yours,
Of name as high in history, by my sires
None otherwise than yours from yours bequeathed
With attributes and accidents to boot
Of chance hereditary : which truth being truth,
Fierce madness is it in me for sheer despite
To league myself against my kind, and give
My brethren's throats up to the popular knife
And rage of hands plebeian, all for this,
This recompense of all, to stand myself
Amid the clamorous rout of thralls released

Dumb, disarrayed, disseated, dispossessed,
Degraded and disfigured of the grace
My birth had cast about me : but, my lords,
Not all men alway, though ye know not this,
Yearn toward their own ends only, live and die
Desiring only for themselves and theirs
Honour, with sure-eyed justice ; righteousness
That holds the rights up of a noble's house,
Walks firm and straight on service in his hall,
But halts beyond his threshold ; equity
Which is not equal, justice less than just,
And freedom based on bondage : else indeed,
Were all souls nobly born so base by birth,
No tongue most violent or most furious hand
Uplift or loud against nobility
Spake ever yet nor struck unjustly. Men
May bear the blazon wrought of centuries, hold
Their armouries higher than arms imperial, yet
Know that the least their countryman, whose hand
Hath done his country service, lives their peer
And peer of all their fathers. Ye, that know
Nor this nor aught that men call manful—ye
That feed upon your fathers' fame as worms
Fed on their flesh, and leave it rotten—ye
That prate and plume and prank yourselves in pride
Because your grandsires, men that were, begat
Sons yet not all unmanned, and these again
Begot on wombs less loyal than of yore
You—how should ye know this ? But I, fair lords,
Born even as you, was nurtured even as they

Whom your fair lordships hold, being humbler born,
Foul : hand in hand with these I fought your fights,
I bore your banner : nor was mine in strife
Reared higher than hands which there kept rank with
mine,

And were not noble : whence, from touch of these
And fellowship in fighting, I, whom ye
Call peer of yours, found poor men peers of mine
And you by proof of act and test of truth
Vassals. But some perchance of yours, ye say,
Fought far and fain of fight as we, and bore
As high the lion : sirs, we know it : but this
We know not, that ye bore it higher, or stood
More steadfast in the shock of charging death,
Than poor men born your followers : and on these,
On sons of these ye have laid such laws, and made
Life so by manlike men unbearable,
That by what end soever he that ends
This reign of chance, this heritage of reign,
Must live or die approved of all save you,
Of justice justified, of earth and heaven
In life or death applauded. Nought would I
Nor aught would any say to shame you more :
And now, as ye must live, it seems, let me
Die : God be with you, and content with me.

BENINTENDE.

Lords councillors, declare your sentence.

ALL.

Death.

K

BENINTENDE.

Then, Marino Faliero, Doge, thus
By me this court speaks judgment on thee, now
Convicted by confession. As today
Thy chief twain fellow-traitors, gagged and gyved,
From the red pillars of the balcony
Swing stark before the sunset, so shalt thou
At noon tomorrow suffer privily
Decapitation ; and thy place of death
The landing-place that crowns the Giants' Stairs
Where first thine oath was taken. For thy corpse,
We grant it burial with thy sires by night
In Zanipolo : but thy portrait's place
Among our painted princes in the hall
Of our great council void and bare shall stand
In sign of shame for ever, veiled in black,
Where men shall read, writ broad below, *This place
Is Marino Faliero's, for his crimes
Beheaded.*

FALIERO.

Ay ? that all men seeing may crave
To know what crime of crimes was his, and hear
The word in answer given that crowns the deed
Wherewith confronted all fair virtues, all
Good works of all good men remembered, seem
Pale as the moon by morning—even the word
That was to Greece as godhead, and to Rome

The sign and seal of sovereign manfulness—
Tyrannicide : thanks be with tyranny
That so by me records it. I shall sleep
Tonight, I think, the gladlier that I know
Where I shall lay my head tomorrow. Sirs,
Farewell, and peace be with you if it may.
I have lost, ye have won this hazard : yet perchance
My loss may shine yet goodlier than your gain
When time and God give judgment. If there be
Truth, true is this, that I desired the right
And ye with hands as red sustain the wrong
As mine had been in triumph. Have your will :
And God send each no bitterer end than mine.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*An apartment in the ducal palace.*

Enter FALIERO, the DUCHESS, and BERTUCCIO.

FALIERO.

Nay, children, be not over childlike, ye
That see what men who love not truth will call
The natural doom ensuing which marks as mad
And damns to death inevitable as just
An old man's furious childishness : be you
Wiser : let me not need bid you be wise,
Who am found of all men foolishest, and yet
Were this last chance before me laid again

Would do not other than I did. Take heart :
What mean ye so to mourn upon me?

BERTUCCIO.

Sir,

Am I not found unworthy ?

FALIERO.

No, my boy :

They do not ill, being lords of ours, to slay
Me ; nay, they could not spare : but thee to slay,
To spill thy strong young life for truth to me,
In all men's eyes would mark them monstrous : thou
Must live, and serve my slayers, and serving them
Sustain my memory by the proof—if God
Shall give thee grace to prove it—that thy name,
Thy father's name and mine, in true men's ears
Rings truth, and means not treason. Though they be
Ill rulers of this household, be not thou
Too swift to strike ere time be ripe to strike,
Nor then by darkling stroke, against them : I
Have erred, who thought by wrong to vanquish wrong,
To smite by violence violence, and by night
Put out the power of darkness : time shall bring
A better way than mine, if God's will be—
As how should God's will be not ?—to redeem
Venice. I was not worthy—nor may man,
Till one as Christ shall come again, be found
Worthy to think, speak, strike, foresee, foretell,
The thought, the word, the stroke, the dawn, the day,

That verily and indeed shall bid the dead
Live, and this old dear land of all men's love
Arise and shine for ever : but if Christ
Came, haply such an one may come, and do
With hands and heart as pure as his a work
That priests themselves may mar not. God forbid
That : if not they, then death shall touch it not,
Nor time lay hand thereon, nor wrath to come
Of God or man prevail against it, though
Men's tongues be mad against him till he die.

(Voices chanting from below.)

*Quis es tantus, quis es talis,
Cui non ira triumphalis,
Ira fulvis ardens alis,
Metu mentem comprimit?
Ira Dei, nobis dira,
Manet immortalis ira,
Sensu sæva, visu mira,
Mitis quæ non fletu fit.*

FALIERO.

Again my psalmists answer me ? who bade
These voices hither outside the sanctuary
To sound below there now ? Nay, this can be
But chance of sacred service, or goodwill
To usward in our darkening hour, or scorn
Wherewith being moved we should but stand abased
Too low for base men's mockery. What, my child,
Does their fierce music hurt thee ?

DUCHESS.

Nay, not more,
My lord, than all things heard or seen that say
I shall not see nor hear much longer you
Whom, though I loved you ever, now meseems
I have never loved as now ; God knows how well,
None knows but I how bitterly : but this
I should not say, to vex your kind last thoughts
With more than even your natural care of me.

FALIERO.

Sweet, wouldst thou think to vex me? nay, then, weep :
Else canst thou not. This very wrath of God
Wherewith the threats of priestly throats would shake
Mountains, and scourge the sea to madness, what
Can this do, being by tears intractable,
Implacable to moan of men, if men,
Being threatened, moan or weep not ? Fear and shame,
The right and left hand of a base man's faith,
Can lay not hold on hearts found higher : and how,
Were God no higher of heart than men most base,
But wayward, fierce, unrighteous, merciless,
As these who praise proclaim him, how should he
Have power on any save a base man's heart ?
His wings of wrath were narrower than the soul's
That soar and seek toward justice, though the wind
Break them, and lightning burn the blind bright eyes
That even for love would look on God and live,
But find for light fire, and for comfort fear.

(*Chanting again.*)

*Nigris involutum pennis
Te circumdat nox perennis ;
Non quinquennis, non decennis
Implicabit umbra te ;
Sed antiqua, sed æterna,
Dum sit lux in cælo verna,
Nox profunda, nox hiberna,
Christus unde salvet me.*

FALIERO.

And Christ keep all who love him clean of you
Who turn their love to loathing. Why, these priests
Would make the sunshine hellfire, thence to light
The piles whereon they burn with live men's limbs
The heart and hope of manhood. Light save this
They know not, nor desire it : light and night
To them are other than to men that see
Light laugh in heaven and hurt not, night come down
To comfort men from heaven : sweet spring to them
Is winter, and their souls of the iron ice
That Alighieri found at hell's hard heart
Take winter's core for springtide. Woe were thine,
Venice, and woe were Italy's, if these
Held ever in their hand all hearts of men
Born fain to serve their country : priests would turn
With prayers and promises and blessings half
The blood therein to death-cold poison.

BERTUCCIO.

Sir,

Did not the imperial Gregory glorify
Rome, when his heel set on the German's neck
Trampled her sovereign foeman as a snake
Starved in the snows ? and might not such a priest
Bless freedom, and the blessing of his breath
Not blast but bid it blossom ?

FALIERO.

Son, by Christ,

I doubt a curse were found less like to hurt
And frost less like to wither.

DUCHESS.

Dear my lord,

Have patience, and take heed of words ; they fall
Not echoless on silence ; these of yours
Affright me ; nay, be patient, and give ear,
And pardon me that pray you hearken.

FALIERO.

Ay—

To what word next shall fill our ears with prayer
That fain would sound like thunder ? Let them pray.

(Chanting again.)

*Nos, ut servi facti servis,
Fracti corde, fracti nervis,
Congregamur in catervis,
Vagabundi, tremuli ;*

*Sed, ô fautor tu sincere,
Judex mitis ac severe,
Miserere, miserere,
Miserere populi !*

FALIERO.

Yea, for they need and find not mercy, they
Whose count makes up the people. God, if God
Be pitiful, on these have pity : man
Hath more for beasts he slays in sport, for hounds
That help him, than for women, children, men,
He treads to death and passes ; would that I,
Though ruin had earlier fallen on me, and left
Less than I leave of record now, betimes
Had taken thought to comfort these, or make
At least their life more even with equity,
Their days more clear of cloud, their sleep more sure,
Their waking sweeter. Lord and chief was I,
And left them miserable ; not vile indeed
As those whom kings may spit on, but abased
Below the royal right of manhood.

DUCHESS.

Nay—

Have you not alway shown them kindness more
Than poor men crave of noble ?

FALIERO.

Child, the right
That man of man craves, and requires not, being
Too weak to claim and conquer, what is this

But sign and symbol of so vile a wrong,
So foul a fraud, so fierce a violence, borne
So long and found so shameful, that the prayer
Sounds insolence? I do not pray thee—*Sweet,*
Play me not false; thou dost not pray me spare
To smite, revile, misuse thee : man of man
Desiring mercy, justice, leave to live,
Were all as base a suppliant. No, not me
But one more pure of passion, one more strong,
Being gentler and more just, if God be good
And time approve him righteous, God shall give
The grace I merited not, to do men right
And bring men comfort : wrath and fear and hope,
Save such as angels watching earth from heaven,
And filled with fiery pity pure as God's,
Feel, and are kindled into love, to him
Shall rest unknown for ever : men that hear
His name far off shall yearn at heart, and thank
God that they hear, and live : but they that see,
They that touch hands with heaven and him, that feed
With light from his their eyes, and fill their ears
With godlike speech of lips whereon the smile
Is promise of more perfect manhood, born
Of happier days than his that knew not him,
And equal-hearted with the sun in heaven
From rising even to setting, they shall know
By type and present likeness of a man
What, if truth be, truth is, and what, if God,
God : for by love that casts itself away
And is not moved with passion, but more strong

For sacrifice deliberate and serene
Than passion sevenfold heated for revenge,
Shall all not beastlike born, not serpent-souled,
Not abject from the womb, discern the man
Supreme of spirit, and perfect, and unlike
Me : for the tongue that bids dark death arise,
The hand that takes dead freedom by the hand
And lifts up living, other these must be
Than mine, and other than the world, I think,
Shall bear till men wax worthier.

BERTUCCIO.

Such a man
Shall come not even till God come back on earth.

FALIERO.

Who knows if God shall come not ? or if God
Be other—yea, be anything, my son,
If not the spirit incarnate and renewed
In each man born most godlike, and beheld
Most manful and most merciful of all ?

(*Chanting again.*)

*Parce, Deus, urbi parce ;
Tuque summâ constans arce
Sis adjutor urbi, Marce :
Cor peccatis conditum
Nescit quanta, nescit qualis,
Lex æterna, lex æqualis :
Mors per Christum fit mortalis,
Vita fit per Spiritum.*

FALIERO.

Ay, with the breath of God between her lips
From Christlike lips breathed through them, she that
lay

Dead in the dark may stand alive again,
And strike death dead : yea, death may turn to life
By grace of that live spirit invulnerable
We call the breath or ghost of God most high,
The very God that comes to comfort men,
That falls and flies abroad in tongues of fire
From soul to soul enkindled. Mark nor Christ
Wrought miracle ever more than this divine
Nor so by slaves and fools incredible
As this should be, to raise not one man up,
Not one man four days dead, as Lazarus once,
But all a people many a century dead,
And damned, men deemed, to death eternal. This
The heart of man, buried as dead in sins,
May feel not nor conceive, and having felt
Continue in corruption : this alone
Shall stand a sign on earth from heaven, whose light
Makes manifest the righteousness of God
In mortal godhead proven immortal, shown
Firm by full test of mere infirmity
And very God by manhood. Otherwhere
Might no man hold this possible, but here
May no man hold this doubtful. Are we not
Italians, made of our diviner earth

And fostered of her far more sovereign sun,
That we should doubt, and not be counted mad,
What no man born to less inheritance
And reared on records less august than ours
Would not be mad to dream that he believed
And would not sin to seek it? Have not we
Borne men to witness for the world, and made
Grey time our servant and our secretary
To register what none may read and say
That ours is not the lordship, ours the law,
And ours the love that lightens and that leads
High manhood by the heart as mothers lead
Children, and history leads us by the hand
From glory forth to glory through the gloom
That bids not hope die, nor bring forth despair,
Though faith alone keep heart to comfort us?
What though five hundred years pass—what, were
these

A thousand, if the sepulchres at last
Be rent, and let forth Venice—and let rise
Rome? Yea, my city, what though time and shame,
Though change and chance defile thee? Servitude
Shall fall from off thee as the shadow of night
Falls from the front of morning : thou shalt see
By life re-risen above the tombs revived
Death stricken dead, and time transfigured. We
Fight, fall, and sleep, and shadows shewn in song
And phantoms painted of us overlive
Our substance and our memory : men that hear

A name that was a clarion once will cry,
What means it? eyes that see on storied walls
Our likeness carven or coloured may perchance
Wax wide with wonder why to dead men's eyes
Our fame seemed worth memorial : but to none
Shall not our country seem divine, and heaven
The likeness of our country. Die we may
From record of remembrance : but, being sons
Whose death or life, whose presence or whose dust,
Whose flesh or spirit is part of Italy,
What mean these fools to threaten us with death?

DUCHESS.

My lord, your heart is nobly bent on earth,
But earthward ever : soon by doom of man
Must your strong spirit of life and pride pass forth
And dwell where all of earth it loved is found
Nothing ; for you—if love may speak, that speaks
For faith's and fear's sake now presumptuously—
Meseems for you this hour should keep in sight
Not Italy, but paradise : alas,
I cannot tell what I should say to please
God, and to do you service : yet I would
Say somewhat, might it serve.

FALIERO.

Thou sayest enough
With so sweet eyes. Content thee : death is not
Fearful, nor aught in death or life but fear.

(*Chanting again.*)

*Pestis quâ dolore cincta
Gemit vita fletu tincta,
Suis ipsa vinculis vincta,
Cadit reatrix rerum fors :
Portentosa, maledicta,
Suo dente serpens icta,
Jacet mundi victrix victa,
Jacet mortem passa mors.*

FALIERO.

Lo now, the folk who live and thrive by death,
Who feed on all men's fear of it, deride
The fear they foster : be not priestlier thou
Than very priests are. Child, if God be just,
Let God do justice : if he be not, then
Man's righteousness rebukes him : and the man
That loves not more himself than other men
Is held not all unrighteous. Death, I think,
Of all my sins shall shrive me : say this were
Sin, which had yet shed less of innocent blood
Than any blameless battle spills, and earns
For all who fought men's praises, yet I give
My life for lives I took not, and I give
Less grudgingly than gladly. Not for me
Need any—nay, not ye—weep, as myself,
Were tears to me less hard and strange, might weep
For some that die with me and some that live.
I am sorry for my seamen : Calendaro

Was no faint heart in fight, but swift of hand
As fire that strikes : if one that bears his name
Crave ever help at need or grace of thee,
Forget not me nor him, but what thou canst,
If any grace be left thee, son, to shew,
Do gladly for my sake : he served me well :
And now the wind swings and the ravens rend
What was a soldier. Not to mine or me
Has this the fairest palace built with hands
Been fortunate or favourable : the day
Last year that led me hither led me not
With prosperous presage toward the natural shore
That should have given me welcome.

DUCHESS.

No, my lord.

The sign was fearful to us.

FALIERO.

Ay—there to alight
Where men that die by law, thou knowest, are slain
Was no such token as uplifts men's hearts
And swells their hopes with promise. Dost thou mind
How deadly lowered that noon whose haze beguiled
Our blindfold bark of state to the evil goal
Whereon my life now shatters? Thou didst think
A sign it was from Godward. Let it be.
No sign can help or hurt us that foreshows
What must be : God might spare his dim display
Of half portended purpose, and appear

No less august, less wise or terrible,
Than threats that scare or scare not hearts like ours
With doom incognizable of doubtful death
Proclaim him and proclaim not. Now from mine
The shadow of doubt has passed away, and left
The shadow of death behind it, which to me
Seems less uncomfortable and dark : for this
I ever held worse than all certitude,
To know not what the worst ahead might be
As now, being near the rocks, I see it, and die.

(Chanting again.)

*Contemplamini, quot estis,
Ex infernâ quàm cælestis
Illa nobis olim pestis
Salus exit hominum :
Mors in vitam transformata
Mutat mundos, mutat fata,
Fulget per stellarum prata
Lumen ipsa luminum.*

FALIERO.

If by man's hope or very grace of God
Dark death be so transfigured, I, that yet
Know not, desire not knowledge, being content
To prove the transformation : thou, if this
Please thee, believe and hold for actual truth
That which gives heart at least to heartless fear
And fire to faith and power to confidence
More strong than steel to strike with. Sure it is

That only dread of death is veriest death
And fear of hell blows hellfire seven times hot
For souls whose thought foretastes it : and for all
That fear not fate or aught inevitable,
Seeing nought wherein change breeds not may be
changed

By force of fear or vehemence even of hope,
Intolerable is there nothing. Seven years since
Mine old good friend Petrarca should have died,
He thought, for utter heartbreak, and he lives,
And fills men's ears and souls with sweeter song
Than sprang of sweeter seasons : yet is grief
Surely less bearable than death, which comes
As sure as sleep on all. We deem that man
Of men most miserably tormented, who,
Being fain to sleep, can sleep not : tyrants find
No torture in their torturous armoury
So merciless in masterdom as this,
To hold men's lids aye waking : and on mine
What now shall fall but slumber ? Yet once more,
If God or man would grant me this, which yet,
Perchance, is but a boy's wish, fain I would
Set sail, and die at sea ; for half an hour,
If so much length of life be left me, breathe
The wind that breathes the wave's breath, and rejoice
Less even in blithe remembrance of the blast
That blew my sail to battle, and that sang
Triumph when conquest lit me home like fire—
Yea, less in very victory, could it shine
Again about me—less than in the pride,

The freedom, and the sovereign sense of joy,
Given of the sea's pure presence. Mine she was
By threescore years and ten of strenuous love
Or ever man's will wedded us : and hers
Am I now dying not so divine a death
As Istria might have given me, had the stars
Shone less oblique that marred and made my doom
Most adverse in prosperity. That day
Rang trumpet-like in presage and in praise
Of proud work done and prouder yet to do
By hands and hearts Venetian : then to die
With so great sound and splendour on the sea
Shed broad from battle rolling round us—there
To put life off triumphantly, like one
That lies down lordlier than he rose, and wears
Rest like a robe of triumph, woven more bright
Than gold that clothed him waking—this had been
High fortune for the highest of happier men
Than fate had made Faliero. But for him
Reserved was this, to reap for harvest thence
Praise, acclamation, thanksgiving, and sway,
Which all were worth not any mean man's wage
Who serves and is not scoffed at : and from these,
Reaped once, to grind the bitter bread of shame,
And taste it salt as tears are. This white head,
Which swords had spared that should not, being set
 high,
Hath borne a buffet for a crown, and felt
The strokes of base men bruise it : eyes and tongues
More vile than earth have mocked at me, and live,

And hiss and glare me to my grave, cast out
From high funereal fellowship of fame
And daylight honour shewn the dead that pass
Unshamed among their fathers. Let it be.
Albeit no place among them all were mine,
Time haply might bring back my dust, and chance
Mix all our tombs together : but such hope
Should move not much the lightest soul alive
That death draws near to enfranchise, and to bring
Far out of reach of death and chance and time.

(*Chanting again.*)

*Spes incertas facit certas,
Mentes implet inexpertas,
Lux in animo libertas,
Fides in superna dux :
Ut æternam per æstatem,
Per supernam civitatem,
Fiat lux per libertatem,
Sit libertas ipsa lux.*

FALIERO.

Yea? then, God send it be so : for he knows,
Though priests and lay-folk, lords and vassals born,
Know not, that God's omnipotence can make
No light whose fire outshines a marshlight shine
On eyes that see not freedom. Faith, whose trust
Forsakes for thirst of heaven our natural earth,
And hope that hovers out of sight, and love
Whose eyes being set against the sun are blind

And see not men that suffer, nor look back
To lift and light them up with comfort given
From brethren's hearts to brethren, these can heal
Of all the mortal plaguesores of the world
None, and for all their wild weak will can give
Nothing ; they wail and cry, they rage and rend,
Shed blood with prayer for sacrifice, and make
Day foul with fume of fires unnatural, whence
Hell risen on earth reeks heavenward : nor may man
From faith that hangs on lips whose doom feeds hell,
From hope through fear kept living, or from love
Whose breath burns up the life of pity, dream
To gather fruit, and die not. Liberty
Is no mere flower that feeds on light and air
And sweetens life and soothes it, but herself
Air, light, and life, which being withdrawn or quenched
Or choked with rank infection till it rot
Gives only place to death and darkness. I
Would fain have hewn a way for her to pass
As fire that cleaves a forest : and the flame
'Takes hold on me that kindled it. My child,
Weep not for that ; weep, if thou wilt, that man,
So kind and brave as good men are, so true,
So loving, yet should be so slow to love
More than the life of days and nights, fulfilled
With love and hate that flower and bear not fruit,
Pain, pleasure, fear, and hope more vain than these,
Freedom. Thou wast not wont to weep : thine eyes
Were flower-soft emeralds ever : now they turn
To cloudier change than flaws the sapphire found

Not worth a bright brow's wearing. What is here
Allowed of God or wrought of men, that thou
Shouldst weep to see it? I have sinned, and die : if
sin

It be to strike too swift and wide a stroke
At men undoomed of justice, though by truth
Long since, and witness borne of wrongdoing here,
Doomed ; and if death it be for one content,
For one most tired with sight and sense of ill,
To pass, and know no more of it, but sleep
Where sleep takes heed of nothing. Ye that wake,
Forget not nor remember overmuch
Or me that loved you and was loved, or aught
Of time's past coil or comfort : what ye will
Of what gives comfort yet, if aught there be,
Keep still in heart, and nought that gives not : life
Hath borne for me not bitter fruit alone,
But sweet as love's own honey : nor for you,
What several ways ye walk soever, till
Night fall about them, shall not life bring forth
Comfort. And now, before the loud noon strike
Whose stroke for me sounds midnight, ere I die,
Kiss me. Live thou, and love my Venice, boy,
Not more than I, but wiselier : serve her not
For thanksgiving of men, nor fear nor heed,
Nor let it gnaw thine heart to win for wage,
Ingratitude : let them take heed and fear
Who pay thee with unthankfulness, but thou,
Seeing not for these thou fightest, but for them
That have been and that shall be, sons and sires,

Dead and unborn, men truer of heart than these,
Be constant, and be satisfied to serve,
And crave no more of any. Fare thee well.
And thou, my wife and child, all loves in one,
Sweet life, sweet heart, fare ever well, and be
Blest of God's holier hand with happier love
Than here bids blessing on thee. Hark, the guard
Draws hither : noon is full : and where I go
Ye may not follow. Be not faint of heart :
I go not as a base man goes to death,
But great of hope : God cannot will that here
Some day shall spring not freedom : nor perchance
May we, long dead, not know it, who died of love
For dreams that were and truths that were not. Come :
Bring me but toward the landing whence my soul
Sets sail, and bid God speed her forth to sea.

[*Exeunt.*

[January, 1885.]



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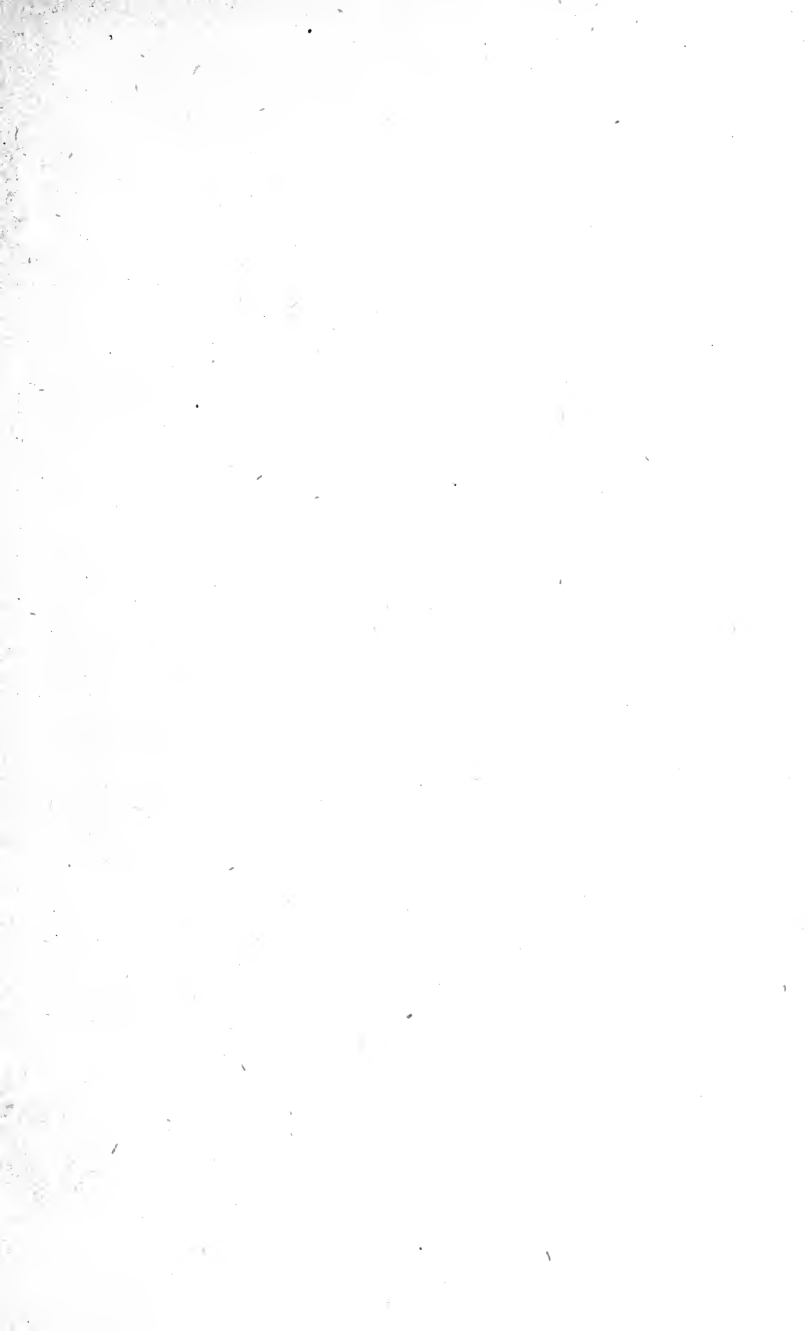
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